This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

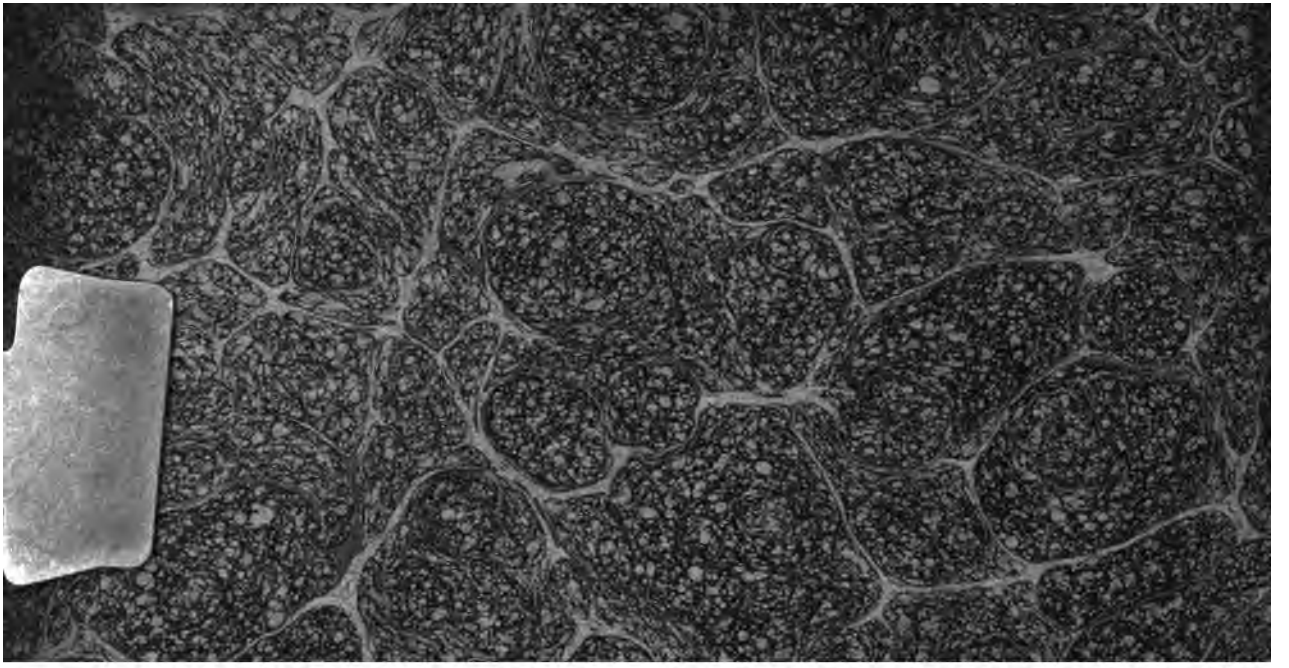
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

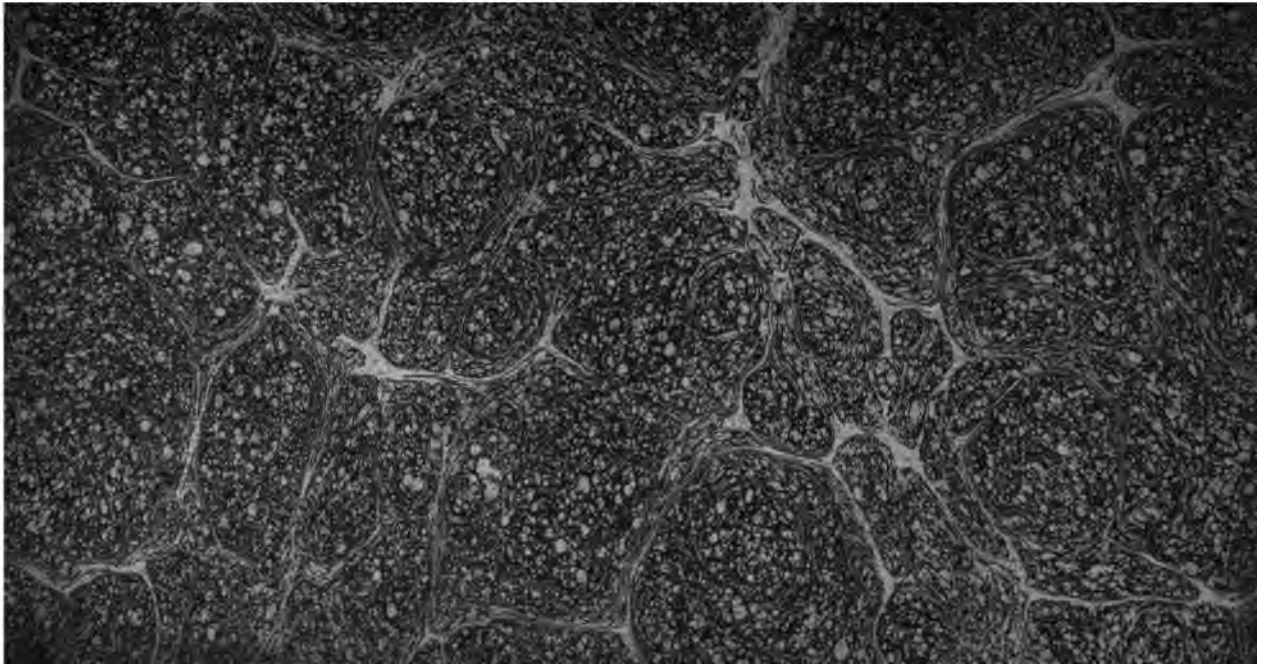
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`





600069024R

DONALD MONTEITH.

A NOVEL.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

DONALD MONTEITH,

THE

HANDSOMEST MAN OF THE AGE.

A Novel.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

By SELINA DAVENPORT,

AUTHOR OF

THE HYPOCRITE, OR THE MODERN JANUS; THE SONS OF THE VISCOUNT AND DAUGHTERS OF THE EARL, &c.

"Hers are the pangs of wounded pride,
Of blasted hope, of wither'd joy:
The prop she lean'd on pierc'd her side,
The flame she fed burns to destroy.

In vain does Memory renew
The scenes once ting'd in transport's dye;
The sad reverse soon starts to view,
And turns the past to agony.
Even conscious Virtue cannot cure
The pangs to every feeling due!"

VOL. III.

London:

Printed at the Minerva Press for

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.

1815.

249. s. 183.

DONALD MONTEITH.

CHAPTER I.

MARY had no sooner entered her chamber than she flung herself on a chair, on which were hung some articles of Monteith's dress; the sight of them awakened her grief, and she gave way to the agony of her feelings, as she pressed the inanimate clothes to her breast. The sobs of Mrs. Byron, who hung over her with all the affection of a parent, recalled her attention to her aged friend.

"Do not afflict yourself, my more than mother," said she, with her usual conside-

rate sweetness; "my sorrows cannot last. You know with what idolatrous fondness I, next to my Creator, worship Monteith. He is no longer mine. Merciful Providence! do I live to say that he is no longer my husband—that he belongs to another—and that I must henceforth renounce all claim to his love? My friend, my dear friend, to do this I must relinquish my own existence; it is entwined with his, and cannot be separated."

"Say not so, Mary, say not so; Monteith is unworthy this heroic affection. To what has his selfish passion reduced you!—to what has he consigned his child! Oh, let not that child lose at once both his parents!"

"My boy! my darling!" wildly exclaimed Mary, attempting to rise; but the feebleness of her limbs restrained her.

Mrs. Byron, however, rang for the infant; and taking him from his nurse, placed him on the throbbing bosom of his distracted mother—"Live, my dear Mary, for this sweet innocent," said she; "his

father has given you a cruel right to dispose of his future destiny. Oh, bear up, my dearest child, against this dreadful misfortune! for his sake who now stretches forth his little arms, as if to join with me in supplicating your protection and care, call forth all your fortitude—rally your sinking spirits! think only of the deep and irremediable injury you have sustained, and let the just resentment of wounded *virtue* enable you to struggle against the fondness of a woman!"

Mary shook her head, while the paleness of her looks, the wildness of her air, as she passionately clasped her child to her bosom, more and more alarmed her watchful friend. Pressing her cold lips to those of her smiling infant, she said—"Can I look on this beautiful image of my Donald, on this dear pledge of our love, and feel any other sentiment than that of tenderness for his father? Oh, my dear friend, my life for it, Monteith has been betrayed, nay, forced into this hateful union. I

know that it is not necessary in Scotland for a priest to perform the sacred ceremony. A very little is sufficient to sanction their marriages. I know he does not believe it legal; his heart is mine, and must break with mine."

"I would fain give credit to your fond excuse," replied Mrs. Byron; "I wish not to suppose that Monteith has acted basely; yet your conduct must not be influenced by this partial hope. You, my dear Mary, have but one thing to do; you must sacrifice yourself to the claims of his wife—nay, start not, my child; do not deceive yourself for a moment with vain wishes: the laws of Scotland will decide against you, as well as those of honour and virtue."

"Alas!" said Mary, in a feeble voice, "I mean not to infringe on the rights of another." Then sighing deeply, she added, "How shall I convince Mr. Graham that I am more deserving of his compassion than of his censure?"

"Of that he is already convinced," replied Mrs. Byron. "Could I venture to

leave you for a few minutes, I would consult with him upon the best plan for our future actions."

"You may leave me with safety," murmured the heart-broken Mary. "Tell Betty to feed my boy; I dare not offer him his accustomed nourishment, lest the fever which is creeping through my veins may poison his.—Dear angel, I will try to live, to prove to thee the true heart of thy mother!—Say to Mr. Graham, that the distraction of my thoughts will not permit me to express properly a sense I have of his kindness—that I am assured he sympathizes in my anguish—and that I will not deceive him in the expectation he has formed of the energy of my mind. Say to him, that although he has been the means of blasting for ever my hope of happiness, yet I give him credit for the interest he seemed to feel for me, and that I will be guided solely by his and your advice."

Mrs. Byron persuaded her to take a little wine and water, into which she put a few

drops of laudanum, just sufficient to lull the violence of her distress, and to throw her into a gentle slumber; she then placed her on the bed, and returned to the parlour.

Mr. Graham met her at the door, and with a look of real solicitude, inquired after her young friend—"Never before," said he, "have I felt so strong an interest for one wholly unknown to me; I came here prejudiced against the woman who was injuring my Agnes in the deepest manner. I saw this lovely, this apparently innocent young creature, and my resentment was alone directed towards Monteith, who had thus sacrificed the happiness of a second deserving object. We are strangers, my dear madam, to each other; but our mutual misfortune must link us confidently together. Nature and justice compel me to advocate the cause of my own daughter; yet my heart bleeds for her rival. In placing my Agnes in the situation she ought to hold in society, as the lawful wife of this misguided young

man, let me avoid giving any unnecessary pain to your friend; let us unite in procuring for her a safe and comfortable asylum for the present, where she will be concealed from the dangerous eloquence of Monteith; she must see him no more. *You* of course will not quit her in her affliction, and I will be ready to afford you every assistance, either by my fortune or my advice."

"In the name of my suffering child I thank you," replied Mrs. Byron; "she is deserving of a happier lot. No common attachment binds her to Monteith. I know the ardour, the enthusiasm of her character; and I tremble for her life, when she is separated from all that can render it valuable. Yet I think I also know the romantic generosity of her nature; it will enable her to forward your wishes, and in considering that she has, until this day, always believed herself the wife of Monteith, and, as such, given way to the adoration she feels for him, great praise will be due to her if she nobly resigns all claim

to his future tenderness, in favour of your daughter. It is one thing, sir, to *know* our duty, and it is another to *perform* it."

"True, madam," said the venerable stranger; "and my Agnes possesses a mind capable of appreciating the value of such a sacrifice, though the mildness of her disposition may unsuit her to enter into all the romantic enthusiasm of your young friend's; she may not love Monteith with all the fervour and energy of Mary, but her affection is not less constant, less tender. My task is truly a painful one; I love my daughter—I pity Miss Fitzroy; and after all, I cannot avoid feeling a sentiment of commiseration for the unhappy cause of all our woe. Past the time of life when passion has the power to agitate the human heart, I nevertheless feel the force of those graces which appear natural in this lovely young woman; I own that Monteith has been injured by the hasty and ill-judged conduct of his father; I own the powerful attractions of your friend; and I lament, though vainly, that my be-

loved Agnes was ever persuaded into a belief that he was willing to become her husband. I know that Monteith will await the decision of his country; I fear also that he will never forget this amiable creature—nay, he cannot. Is she not the mother of his boy? Has he not blasted both these sweet blossoms by his selfish fondness? How, then, can he forget them?—how can he be just to Agnes?"

Poor Mrs. Byron now stole softly to the chamber of Mary. She still slept; but her slumbers were disturbed, and the ready tear still trembled on her cheek. Mrs. Byron returned.

"You must be convinced, my dear madam," continued Mr. Graham, "that it would be cruel and impolitic to allow your friend to see the man she adores. To-morrow he returns; to-night she must be removed from this house; I will go instantly, and procure lodgings in town for your accommodation. Compelled by dire necessity to rob her of her natural protec-

tor, I will at least be a father to her; my age and appearance will shield her from censure, and Heaven and your tenderness must do the rest."

Mrs. Byron, greatly affected, assented to his proposal, and he then left her, promising to return within two hours. As soon as he was gone, she rang for Betty, in whom she could fearlessly confide. The poor creature suspected that something was amiss, and the redness of her eyes betrayed that she had not seen unmoved the altered countenance of her mistress. Mrs. Byron took the baby from her arms, and desired her to pack up immediately all its clothes, and every article belonging to her *mistress*, in books, linen, and valuables—"We must leave this house, Betty, to-night. Ask no questions; I am incapable of gratifying your affectionate curiosity. I am convinced of your regard for this dear child, and its still dearer mother, and am certain you would be unhappy if you did not accompany us."

"Oh, madam, you were ever the most

excellent of ladies! My heart misgave me when I saw that tall, thin gentleman come here to-day; but I will ask no questions. I humbly thank you on my knees that I am permitted to go with you; but what shall I say to cook if she asks me?"

"Merely that you have received orders to be in readiness to go out of town immediately; the gentleman, who will return shortly, will manage every thing else. But stay, Betty, take these keys, and go to my house; tell Sally to bring me a change of linen for a fortnight, and say that I am obliged to accompany your mistress out of town on business of importance."

Betty wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron, and hastened to execute her commands; while Mrs. Byron, with the infant Donald, returned to the chamber of its unfortunate mother. Worn out with the agitation of her mind, she laid the slumbering boy by the side of Mary, and sunk to rest in an easy-chair which stood by the bed.

Mary at length awoke, and starting up, at first wondered what could have caused her to take so unusual an indulgence. Faint and sick, she tottered to a chair which was near. In a moment the dreadful truth rushed across her brain, and she rose wildly, and moved towards the dressing-closet of Monteith. His slippers, his morning-gown, met her view; she sunk on her knees near them, and raising her pale face to heaven, she would have prayed, but the wildness of her head prevented her. The sword of Monteith, hanging on a nail, caught her eye; she rose, and grasping it firmly, drew the shining blade from the scabbard. A confusion of ideas now crowded into her mind: a sense of her own degradation—of the irreparable loss she should sustain—of the dreadful sacrifice she was about to make—all drove her to desperation—"Pardon, oh God," she exclaimed, "this one act of mine, if I dare to rush unbidden into thy presence! It is thy will to bereave me of him I adore,

and I cannot exist under such a deprivation."

Already was the deadly weapon raised against her throbbing heart, when the shrill cry of her little boy arrested her arm. The sword fell from her trembling hand; and with all a mother's fears, she flew and caught her weeping infant to her bosom. Sensible of the impiety of her conduct, she once more sunk on her knees, with her child in her arms, and fervently implored the forgiveness of that Providence whose mercy and goodness she had thus rashly doubted.

Mrs. Byron found her in that posture, and immediately joined in supplicating the protection of Heaven for her unfortunate favourite. Both rose at the same moment; Mary took the hand of her venerable friend, and leading her into the dressing-closet, pointed to the naked sword which lay on the ground. Mrs. Byron shuddered; she instantly comprehended the dreadful meaning of Mary, and pressing her moist cheek to hers, said—"So impious an intention,

my child, can only be atoned for by a willing submission in future to the decrees of Heaven. The benevolence of God, my Mary, tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and *thou* wilt not be forgotten."

"It was Heaven's interference which alone preserved me from the horrors of suicide. The cry of my infant saved the life of its distracted mother."

"Live then, my dear Mary, for the sake of your son; live to instil into his mind those sentiments of religion and morality which will make him an ornament to his sex, and a blessing to yourself. From this hour make a solemn vow to devote yourself to his welfare, and to bear, for his sake, the calamity which has thus unexpectedly overtaken you. Are you willing, my child, to be directed by me and Mr. Graham? Will you trust yourself to our protection, and abide by our arrangements?"

Mary cast her eyes towards heaven, then on her little boy—"Do with me what you will," said she, in a low voice, "only let me retain my boy. I will try to be all

you wish; yet should I betray a weakness unworthy of your expectations, oh, remember how madly I still love his father—how impossible it is for me ever to do otherwise!"

Betty now came to inform them of the return of Mr. Graham, and to arrange her mistress's things.

Mary still held her infant in her arms, as Mrs. Byron assisted her to descend; they were met by the venerable stranger, who taking the cold hand of Mary, respectfully kissed it, then conducted her to a couch, and seated himself by her side.

"Our dear friend," said Mrs. Byron, "consents to place herself under our care. Have you been successful, sir, in your search?"

"I have," he replied; "and I trust that you will not complain of the accommodations which I have provided for you. It is highly gratifying to my feelings, that, under the peculiar circumstances in which I am unfortunately placed, you condescend to accept of my assistance."

"Alas, sir!" replied the weeping Mary, as she pressed her child still closer to her bosom, "the kind and friendly manner in which you have conducted yourself towards me, calls for all my confidence and respect. For the present I will be guided by your advice. I am too severely afflicted to judge for myself; and I wish also to prove that I was innocent of any intention to injure the peace of one who I was unconscious existed. Were I alone the sufferer in this dreadful calamity, I would submit patiently; but you must pardon me, sir, if I express my fears lest Monteith should, in the horror of the moment, commit some action which would increase our misery. Oh, sir! you know not with what doting tenderness he loves me—you know not the undisturbed happiness we have enjoyed together!—undisturbed, did I say? ah no! even in my arms, when his whole soul has been absorbed by the chaste rapture of mutual love, he has sighed to think that there

might come a time when his secret would be betrayed."

"That I feel for your distress," said the venerable Mr. Graham, "you are convinced—would to God that I could relieve it, and yet save my own daughter! Fear not for Monteith. Deeply as he has injured me and Agnes, it shall be my care to watch over him, to meet him on his return, and sooth his distracted mind. In the mercy of Heaven I place my hope. I implore its assistance in softening the heart of Donald towards the sufferings of the mild, the tender Agnes, and of enabling him to act as a man of honour ought, after he has committed so unworthy a deed. If you wish it, I will deliver to him any message or letter you may think proper to leave."

Mary with difficulty kept from fainting. She trembled so violently, that Mrs. Byron took the infant from her arms, and conveyed him to Betty, hastily left the room, and returned with some drops in water. Mr. Graham was supporting Mary.

He endeavoured to tranquillize her fears for the life and safety of Monteith; and he promised solemnly not to quit him, until he had brought him to a sense of duty, until he was resigned to his loss. The deathlike paleness of Mary's countenance alarmed him; tears of compassion rolled down his furrowed cheeks, and fell on her cold face. She raised her head from his shoulder, and seeing his distress, pressed his hand to her lips—"Oh, sir!" said she, in a low and faltering voice, "you are a witness to my agonies. Death would be a welcome friend; yet I will struggle against my weakness. Tell your Agnes, that for *her* I make this dreadful sacrifice. Her love cannot equal mine, or she would have died, as I should have done, under the neglect or indifference of Monteith. Sixteen months of bliss have we passed together! oh, Monteith! during that period, not one frown or murmur of reproof have I borne from thee! we had but one heart, one mind!"

Her agitations became so violent, that

Mrs. Byron again conjured her to remember her infant, and alluded to the rash action she had meditated in the morning.

The stranger understood her. He flung his venerable arms around the heart-broken girl, and kissing her pale lips, with a parent's tenderness, he said—"Calm your distraction, my dear child. Rely upon my prudence, my humanity. I will supply to you the place of a father; my Agnes will be a sister to you—a mother to your son. For your sake all my resentment shall be forgotten. Monteith shall still owe every thing to your affection. Through your means he shall return to his duty—through you my Agnes will be snatched from the grave—peace will be restored to the bosom of Monteith—his family, all, all of us shall bless your name—the world will loudly applaud the noble sacrifice you have made—and you will be rewarded by the pleasing reflection of having performed the part of a virtuous woman, and of

restoring the object of your regard to the delights of a pure conscience. I pledge my word that I will inform you faithfully of all that relates to Monteith. I will even trust to your honour, and be the bearer myself of any letters between you, as long as your place of residence is concealed from him. Not a reproach shall pass my lips—not a word that can add to his distress. I will act the part of a father, a friend, a mediator; but not that of a rigid monitor."

"I would thank you, sir," replied Mary, "but I am unable. Think not of me; my dear Mrs. Byron will not forsake me. Stay and watch over Monteith—it is there you will make me for ever your debtor."

When a little composed, Mr. Graham brought her paper, pen, and ink, and requested her to write a few lines, which he would give to Donald on his return. Mary, with an unsteady hand and aching head, endeavoured to express her feelings; her tears blotted out what she had writ-

ten. After several attempts, she at length delivered to the stranger what he with great difficulty deciphered.

"Monteith, beloved! adored! it has pleased Heaven to discover to me that dreadful secret which separates us for ever. Think not that I reproach you. Convinced of your affection, and believing that you have been yourself deceived, my heart excuses your conduct as far as regards myself. The law of Scotland dissolves our union. I know your reply—I know that of my own heart, which remains unchanged; it is yours while it has power to throb. The sacrifice I make to virtue and to Agnes, demands an equal one from you. Listen to that best of men, who has with fatherly kindness endeavoured to assuage my anguish, who has promised not to leave you until you are resigned to your fate. Listen, dearest Monteith, and follow his advice.

"In losing you, alas! need I say I

have lost the charm which bound me to existence? yet let me retain our child—in pity to the wounded feelings of his mother, let him remain with me. I dare not trust my pen to say more. Another time, when I have acquired more firmness, you shall hear from me. I shall be safe—I shall not be friendless. For the sake of those who are dear to you, bear up against this heavy affliction. In another world we shall meet, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

As soon as he had perused this feeble attempt of Mary's to address Monteith with the semblance of resignation, he gave it to Mrs. Byron, who, taking up the pen, added the following postscript:—

"Dearest Monteith, what have we not suffered since your departure! yet the poignancy of the shock has been lessened by the friendly and humane conduct

of your father-in-law. Ah, Monteith! what ruin have you not brought on her, who, while she breathes, will still continue to adore you! I pity, I feel for your situation. Mary shall never want a friend while I live—I will not forsake her—we will journey through life together. Oh, Monteith, she is an angel! not a reproachful word escapes her lips; all she asks is to retain her child—all she hopes is that you will make the fortunate Agnes amends for your neglect, and that you will be guided by the counsel of Mr. Graham. After what has been discovered to us, you cannot wonder that Mary should be removed. God protect you! my poor heart is too full to say more!

"ANNA BYRON."

Nothing now remained but to convey the unfortunate Mary to the retreat fixed on by Mr. Graham. A coach was procured, and the trunks were already fastened to it. Betty had satisfied the curiosity of

the cook, and only waited to follow her mistress, if necessary, to the further end of the world. It was now that the assumed fortitude of Mary forsook her. She was about to quit the happy scene of her connubial enjoyments—to abandon it for ever—to resign all claim upon Monteith—to give him up without even a parting embrace—to forsake him in the hour of dreadful trial. It was too much for her to endure, and she sunk lifeless on the couch from which she had endeavoured to rise. In this state she was conveyed to the coach, and from thence to the lodgings which the stranger had provided for her in one of the retired streets of London.

It was judged expedient, as soon as she was put to bed, to send for a physician, who, after a short conference with Mrs. Byron, was enabled to form a proper judgment of the case of his insensible patient. A composing draught was sent for, which he administered himself, and testified great interest in the recovery of the lovely invalid.

Worn out with the agitation she had suffered, Mary soon felt the soothing effects of the medicine she had taken. Sleep afforded her a temporary oblivion, and Mr. Graham expressed his hopes that he should find her in the morning as resigned as the nature of her unhappy situation would admit. He then quitted her, and returned to the hotel, not deeming it necessary to go back that night to Brompton, as Monteith was not expected until late the next day.

He had yet another task to perform, before he could retire to his chamber, and court that repose his wearied spirits stood in need of. His daughter had accompanied him to England, and waited impatiently to learn the result of his painful visit—"My dearest father," said she, embracing him tenderly, "you look pale and fatigued. Shall I ring for Malcolm to bring your coffee?"

Mr. Graham assented, and after taking it, found himself sufficiently refreshed to

enter into the detail of all that had occurred since he had parted from her in the morning.

Agnes listened to him with mute attention; mild, tender, and unassuming, she could not hear unmoved the description of her rival's agonies; the tears of friendly sympathy filled her eyes, and as her father concluded, she once more embraced him —"Dearest, best of parents!" she cried, "how my heart bleeds for the woes of this amiable young woman! oh, my father, how all my sufferings fade away when compared with hers! Sixteen months, you say, she has supposed herself the wife of Donald—sixteen months she has been the idol of his affections—the mother likewise of his son! To be adored by Monteith—to be prest with rapture to his bosom—how enviable once her lot!—how dreadful the reverse! My father, my dear father, and am I the unhappy cause which has blasted their happiness?—am I the sole bar to their felicity?—and have I been the means of tearing from the arms of Mon-

teith the chosen object of his soul? oh, take me back to my dear native land! let me not live to encounter the reproaches, the frowns of him who has disowned me."

"No, my own dearest Agnes," replied the venerable parent, "you must not return to Scotland until Monteith has acknowledged the legality of your marriage. He alone is culpable; his headstrong passions have entailed misery on yourself, and ruined, I fear for ever, the peace of a lovely orphan, who still dotes on him to madness. Oh, my child! were it not too much to ask of you, I could wish you to see this interesting victim. It might be in your power to speak comfort to her wounded mind, by assuring her of your forgiveness. Alas! *she* is free from blame. Poor innocent! *she* is guiltless! Monteith alone is criminal."

"And yet, my father, for my sake, be gentle to his failings. I would, if possible, win him to be just, rather than force him to be generous. Oh that his sisters had

loved me less, or their brother had loved me more!"

"My child, thy fate is a hard one; and yet it is enviable when compared to the amiable unfortunate I have just quitted. Thou, at least, art the *lawful wife* of Monteith—thy country's laws will pronounce thee *that*. Few were thy moments of connubial bliss! one short night sufficed to mock thee with the name of wife; since then thou hast been an alien from his arms. But this poor girl, who has been deluded by a false marriage, she has tasted all the happiness of being the idol of her supposed husband—she has experienced the heaven of mutual love! oh, Agnes! and yet for *thy* sake, this poor girl has abandoned the man of her heart—the father of her little boy; for thy sake she has quitted her home, and thrown herself on my protection! am I not bound to succour her in this hour of trial? and I will. Yes, Agnes, she shall share with thee my care and paternal kindness. I see by thy tears,

and the expression of thy countenance, that thy soul beats in sympathy with mine."

Agnes wiped away the drops of pity which rolled down her pale cheek—"My father, you have done justice to my feelings. I must see the beloved of Monteith—I must press his child to my bosom—I would be a mother to him if I could."

Mr. Graham now explained to his daughter the line of conduct he meant to adopt towards her husband, and the necessity there was of his being absent from her some time, as he wished not to quit Monteith till he could do so with safety—"In the mean while," said he, "endeavour to hope for the best. Time, and your own patience, may bring about a change in the mind of Monteith. Let this at least console you, my Agnes, that the law will compel him to acknowledge your claim."

"Alas!" she replied, "but it cannot bestow on me his affections."

CHAPTER II.

MONTEITH meanwhile hastened towards the house of the person with whom it was necessary he should settle some money concerns before he quitted London. Here he was obliged to remain all night, and part of the next day. He therefore sent off his servant with a note to Mary, lest she should be alarmed by his not arriving as early as he had promised. Notwithstanding the pressing entreaties of his friend, Monteith could not be prevailed on to remain another night. Fearless of danger, he only smiled at the kind attempts which were made to intimidate him, by representing the loneliness of the road, and the many recent robberies which had been committed on it by the most daring footpads.

Anxious to return as soon as possible to

to his beloved Mary, Monteith, after partaking of an early dinner, set off for town, followed by the good wishes and prayers of all the female part of the family, who would fain have persuaded him to remain with them until the morning.

He had just entered the verge of an extensive heath, and was riding uncommonly fast, when a gentleman and his servant came up to him, and he instantly recognised his once-friendly acquaintance, Mr. Clinton. The latter no sooner beheld Monteith than he offered him his hand, expressing his satisfaction at having thus unexpectedly met with him—"I have sought for you in vain," said he; "but not, Monteith, to reproach you for your want of confidence. There *was* a time when I could not help envying your good fortune; I am now, however, perfectly contented with my own, and only long to restore to Arabella Clinton the friend and companion of her youth."

Monteith could not refuse this overture from a man who might with justice have

met him on far different terms. Returning, therefore, the kind advances of Clinton, they journeyed on together until they came to town. The latter, with his natural candour, informed Monteith of his having accompanied Mrs. Scorpion and her daughter to the seaside, and of his becoming the husband of Arabella soon after their return to London.

Monteith, pleased with the sincerity and friendly behaviour of Mr. Clinton, gave him his address. He promised to bring Arabella in a few days to see them, but pressed Monteith to persuade Mary to pay her the first visit, as Mrs. Clinton had not yet been out since she had given birth to a little daughter—"We live by ourselves," said Clinton; "and I find it more agreeable than when we resided with Mrs. Scorpion. You need not, therefore, fear, Monteith, to meet with that lady, whose time is so completely occupied by receiving visits from sir Walter Blenheim, and of preparing every thing against her own nuptials, that we are seldom troubled with

her society. You look incredulous, my friend; but it is actually true, that Mrs. Scorpion is so delighted with the prospect of being called 'my lady,' that she has broken through the resolution of dying a widow, and in the short space of a week, sir Walter will lead my mother-in-law to the hymeneal altar."

Monteith, impatient to be at home, took a hasty leave of the good-natured Clifton, and clapping spurs to his horse, scarce breathed until he stopped at the gate of his once-happy dwelling. With all the ardour of true love, he had pictured to himself the delight of his Mary on seeing him return. Already in imagination he felt the pressure of her lips to his, and saw the smile of rapture dimple her lovely mouth, as she placed his healthy boy in his arms.

Alex knew the ring of his master, but not, as usual, did he fly to give him entrance. Monteith was passing him with all the impatience of a lover, when the

man, in a melancholy voice, informed him that Mr. Graham was there.

"Then I am lost!" replied his master, and rushed wildly into the cottage.

The venerable father of Agnes met him at the door of the parlour; his features bore no traces of that resentment which Monteith expected; on the contrary, pity and sorrow were alone visible. He took the passive hand of Monteith, and led him to a seat—"My son," said he, affectionately pressing his hand, "thy father fears he is but an unwelcome guest."

Monteith looked at him for a moment, then covering his face, exclaimed—"What have you done with my Mary and her child?" Starting from his chair, he was rushing out of the room—"She must be ill, or she would have flown to meet me." He paused, and reseated himself—"I dare not see her—I dare not meet her look! Tell me, sir, I beseech you, how did she bear the unexpected shock? how did she support the knowledge of our mutual misfortune?"

Mr. Graham presented him with the letter which Mary had given to his care. Monteith took it with a trembling hand, first pressing it to his lips; he then hastily tore it open, resolving at once to know the worst. His emotions increased as he eagerly ran over the scarcely-legible characters of his adored Mary. The extent of his misery was now ascertained; his Mary and her infant were both torn from his arms—she had, perhaps voluntarily, fled from the sight of her betrayer. Casting a look of frenzy on Mr. Graham, he leaped from his seat, and would have quitted the house, had he not been prevented by Alex, who, throwing himself before the street-door, enabled Mr. Graham to come up to him.

"Whither would you go, my son?" said the compassionate old man, as he took his arm.

"To my beloved, my injured Mary!" replied Monteith, attempting to disengage himself. "This house is no home for me, now that she has left it.—Rise, Alex; is

this your fidelity? and do you join against your unhappy master?"

"Hear me, Monteith; in the name of that dear unfortunate whom you have deceived, I conjure you to listen to me. For *her sake* return into the parlour, and once more peruse her letter, before you rashly attempt what you will find it impossible to effect."

Monteith suffered himself to be led back to the sitting-room by Mr. Graham. The unsteadiness of his sight almost obscured the well-known characters; yet he, by degrees, made them out, as well as the post-script of Mrs. Byron—"She does not hate me," said he, placing the letter in his bosom; "she does not even reproach me for my guilt! oh Mary! angelic Mary! I know the exquisite tenderness of thy heart —I know it will plead for the father of thy child—I shall be forgiven—I shall still be dear to thee!" Then turning towards Mr. Graham—"Tell me, sir," he inquired, "by what authority you have removed her from her home? what right have you over

her person or her actions? she is mine—mine by the sanction of Heaven! while I exist she shall continue mine! answer me, sir, where have you concealed my Mary and her boy?"

"Have I deserved from *you*, Monteith, this shew of anger?" mildly demanded the father of Agnes; "have I not, in every instance, proved myself your friend? and does not Mary herself acknowledge the tenderness I have shewn in this painful business? moderation and forbearance have governed all my actions, since the fatal hour of your becoming my daughter's husband; and am I now to experience insult and ingratitude from the man who has nearly brought my grey hairs to the grave, and who has blasted the fair morn of my daughter's happiness!"

"Oh, pardon! pardon!" exclaimed Monteith, bursting into an agony of tears, as he fell on one knee before the afflicted old man; "thy gentle nature has ever been averse to the harsh measures of my father. My adored Mary and Mrs. Byron have

confessed thy goodness. Oh let me, on my knees, thank and bless thee for any little kindness shewn to my soul's dearest treasure!"

The old man bent over him; their tears mingled—"Rise, Monteith, rise, and come to my bosom! I feel for thy anguish—I feel for that of thy poor Mary; but I have a child, Monteith, a young, an amiable, a generous, and affectionate child; must not my heart bleed for her likewise? I see her dying by inches, yet she utters no reproach. I know her strong attachment to yourself; I know that she is willing to die, or to endure every evil, rather than disturb your repose. Had you formed a temporary connexion, we might still have cherished hopes; but when the intelligence of your marriage reached us, it was then I felt that you had proved yourself unworthy our patient forbearance, and that it was due to the wounded reputation of Agnes that her father should no longer suffer her to be injured."

Monteith rose, and paced the chamber

with hurried strides; at the mention, however, of his Mary's name, he reseated himself.

"I confess," continued Mr. Graham, "that your cruelty towards my dear, unoffending child, in thus wantonly sporting with her peace, at length roused my just resentment; still I endeavoured to soften down the severity of your father; I even pretended to disbelieve the report, though I deemed it prudent to set out for England, to ascertain the fact myself. The anger which I felt towards you, Monteith, was soon forgotten in the lively interest which the sight of Mary immediately excited; I even suffered myself to be so completely won over to her cause, as to express a regret that necessity compelled me to perform an act of justice towards my own child. I believe her to be worthy of my regard; she is under my protection—she shall not want a father or a friend while I live."

Monteith with difficulty checked the rising sob; he kissed again and again the

hand of Mr. Graham, who cordially sympathized in his severe distress—"Best of men," at length he exclaimed, "I am unworthy of this noble, this godlike conduct; and yet, if you knew how I have suffered from that fatal moment in which I was betrayed, I should be more an object of your pity than resentment. The rash friendship of my father, the mistaken kindness of my sisters, deluded me into an engagement which my heart refused to sanction, though convinced of the superior excellence of your daughter. The manner in which I was betrayed—the willingness with which Miss Graham yielded to their wishes, disgusted me; my soul revolted at a forced union—my delicacy refused to acknowledge *her* for a wife, who had lent herself to such ungracious means of procuring a husband."

"Oh, you have yet to learn the extent of that timid modesty of which you now doubt," said Mr. Graham; "Agnes was as much deceived as yourself: she was led to believe that your affections were hers

—that your vow was a willing one. Too late she found her error; yet surely the delicacy of her conduct since might have taught you, Monteith, that Agnes was not unworthy your respect."

"I esteem her virtues," replied Monteith, "*more* I cannot do. When I left my father's, the morning after I had been so deeply injured, it was with a determination never again to enter his roof: your friendly persuasion, your generous forgetfulness of all personal injury, first led me to lament that I could not accede to your wishes. I soon after saw my beloved Mary; she was an orphan, and unhappy; I loved her to madness; I saw her neglected and ill-treated by her adopted mother; her beauty made me tremble for her safety; opportunity and love untied my tongue; I pleaded but too successfully the passion which I felt, yet I hinted at the possibility of her discovering a secret which I feared might lose me her affection. In spite of the retirement which I said it would be necessary for her to live in—in

spite of the mysterious restrictions which I laid her under, Mary did not hesitate to become my wife."

"Monteith, *there* you were culpable," said Mr. Graham. "Where was your sense of honour, of humanity, when you deceived this amiable creature with a visionary title?—where your morality, when you could perjure yourself in the house of God?"

"I did not, nor ever will, acknowledge the legality of what passed between me and Miss Graham," replied Monteith. "Pardon, I beseech you, this avowal; but my soul would sooner take its flight into the unknown regions of eternity, than own a deed which I was not in a state to resist. Under this impression, that a forced marriage could not be binding, I pledged my faith to Miss Fitzroy. Vain will be all attempts to disunite us. She is mine; we have sworn to live but for each other; and while I exist, no human power shall separate us."

Mr. Graham prudently forbore to in-

crease the irritation of Monteith; his aim was to sooth down the severity of his loss, and to win him, by gentle methods, to bear it with fortitude. That he might not endure the pang of entering the deserted bedchamber of Mary, he proposed to him to accompany him to the hotel where he now resided.

Monteith consented, eager to quit the cottage, since it no longer contained the idol of his affections, and indifferent as to where he slept, since he was deprived of her beloved society. Alex called a coach, into which he assisted his master; then, with a full heart, got up behind, determined, if permitted, to follow him through every change of life.

When they arrived at the hotel, Mr. Graham, who knew that Agnes would have retired to rest, conducted Monteith into his apartments, resigning to him his bed, and ordering one for himself to be made up in a closet next to the room now occupied by his son-in-law; after embracing him tenderly, he entreated him to com-

pose himself, and place the most unlimited confidence in his honour and affection.

Donald appeared to yield to the wishes of his father, who therefore quitted him for the night, and went to the bedchamber of Agnes, that she might be informed of what had passed. When she heard that her husband was so near her and that he bore the shock with tolerable composure, a ray of hope for the first time entered her soul—"Oh my father!" she cried, "who knows but that Heaven may soften his heart towards me, and that I may yet be destined to experience some of his attentions! I will not shew myself until you judge proper. I will not be too hasty in obtruding myself on his notice. Dear father, perhaps your unwearied intercessions at the throne of Mercy have at length been successful, and my dearest Donald will not refuse my claims to his affection."

Mr. Graham, though not as sanguine as his daughter, was nevertheless deceived by the feigned submission of Monteith. He agreed with her, that it would be proper

to conceal herself for some time, lest Monteith should take offence at her presence; then kissing affectionately her pale cheek, he returned to the closet, that he might be near the object of his present solicitude.

Monteith had indeed only feigned to yield to the direction of Mr. Graham; nothing could be further from his intention, than to grant to *force* what he refused to *persuasion*. He nevertheless respected highly the character of Mr. Graham; and the idea of his having softened the poignancy of Mary's distraction—of his having taken her under his fatherly protection, awakened all his gratitude, and demanded from him at least some return; since few men, he acknowledged, would have acted with the same liberality and goodness, the same spirit of generous forbearance, towards one who had so much injured, though innocently, the happiness of his daughter.

Monteith thought he knew the heart of Mary too well to fear any reluctance on her part still to share his fortune; could he

but see her, could he but once more clasp her to his bosom, he dreaded not her reproaches. He was convinced of her unbounded affection, and he trusted to *that*, to find excuses for the injury he had done her and her infant. Borne up by the hope of discovering her retreat, he had consented to accompany Mr. Graham to the hotel. Unwilling to give way to total despair, he suffered himself to believe that he should soon succeed in finding her abode—that he should then remove her beyond the possibility of her being again torn from him—and that happiness was still within his grasp, the moment he should behold the tender Mary and his infant son.

Deluded by this pleasing hope, Monteith flung himself on his bed; and though little inclined to sleep, yet the fatigue of his body overcame his mental inclinations; and when Mr. Graham returned, he had the consolation of finding his son fast asleep, while the faithful Alex, seated by his bed, sat watching the handsome fea-

tures of his master, and occasionally putting up an extempore prayer for his happiness, and that of his absent and equally-beloved mistress.

Vain, however, were the good wishes of poor Alex, that his lady might be ignorant of the deep distress which he saw his master endure for her sake; Mary passed the night of her removal in a dead sleep, owing to the medicine she had taken; in the morning she awoke feverish and unrefreshed. Mrs. Byron was sitting by her side, with the baby in her arms, who no sooner beheld the unclosed eyes of his mother, than, stretching forth his little hands, he uttered a cry, indicative of his wants. Mary pressed him wildly to her bosom. The lovely infant eagerly drew in his accustomed nourishment; while Mrs. Byron, pale and dejected, hung over them with looks of affection and anguish. Mary took her hand, and raised it to her lips in expressive silence.

"My child," said Mrs. Byron, "how are you?"

"My head is still giddy," replied Mary, sighing deeply, "and my heart feels almost too full to perform its accustomed functions; but I am alive, and that is more than I expected."

"Yet not more than you wished, my dear Mary. Look at this innocent angel; to you he owes his existence—to you he looks up for protection, education, and all the duties of a fond mother: let him not look in vain. Weep not, my dearest Mary; try, my child, to rise superior to all selfish considerations, and forgetting the severe deprivation you now endure, heroically determine to live only for him."

Mary raised her languid eyes from the face of her boy, and fixed them mournfully on her friend—"Give me but time, my more than mother," she replied, "and, with the assistance of Heaven, I shall be enabled to answer your wishes; for the sake of my boy I wish to survive the wreck of all that is dear to me; for his sake I wish to drag on a cheerless existence; I

wish also to prove my gratitude to you, and my sense of Mr. Graham's kindness."

"Oh, my Mary," said Mrs. Byron, embracing her, "all I ask of you is, to trust still in the mercy of Providence, and to believe, however difficult it may be, that all is for the best. I know that my presence is dear to you, Mary, therefore I will not leave you. I will help, old as I am, to nurse our little darling. We will teach him that the sure road to happiness is by the path of honour."

Mary cast her tearful eyes on her slumbering child; the smile of happy infancy dimpled his cheek, and quivered on his rosy lips—"Image of all I value on this earth!" she exclaimed, "sacred pledge of no common attachment! for thy dear sake will I struggle with despair! Fate has torn thee from the fond arms of thy adoring father—thy poor broken-hearted mother will vainly attempt to fill his place. But who, dear Mrs. Byron, can, like him, supply to me the dear relationships of parent, husband, friend?"

"The Almighty, my dear child," said Mrs. Byron, raising her hands towards heaven; "the Almighty, who thought fit, in the person of thy infant son, to send to thee the preserver of thy life, will, when he thinks proper, turn thy present misery into bliss. Come, my child, let me assist thee to rise, in order that thou mayest receive the friendly visit of Mr. Graham."

Mary obeyed; she even assumed an air of tolerable firmness, when she saw him approach her, and felt a melancholy consolation as he gave her his paternal benediction. His stay was short; it was merely to inquire after her health, and to repeat his assurances that she might rest satisfied that he would devote himself to the object of her sole solicitude—"You shall see me," said he, "the moment that I feel warranted in leaving Monteith. I will not deceive you in any thing: you shall know all that concerns the welfare of this beloved criminal."

It was with extreme difficulty that Mrs. Byron and Betty could keep life in the

feeble body of Mary during the whole of the next day. Towards the evening, when the hour approached that Monteith had promised to be at home, the imagination of Mary, which pictured in vivid colours his agony, his distraction, on seeing Mr. Graham, on finding her gone, operated so strongly upon her mind, that she became delirious. In this state she continued several hours, until, quite exhausted with her bodily and mental sufferings, she sunk insensible into the arms of Mrs. Byron, who, notwithstanding her own weakness, sat up with her afflicted favourite, refusing to take even the refreshment of an hour's sleep, until morning arrived, and Betty had passed her word not to quit the chamber of her mistress during her temporary repose.

The return of reason brought with it a succession of fainting fits, which alarmed Mrs. Byron even more than her delirium. Convinced that her life was in danger, she was on the point of sending for Mr. Graham,

to ask his advice, when that gentleman fortunately made his appearance.

Shocked at the intelligence she communicated, he hurried to the bedchamber of the suffering Mary, who had just recovered from a fainting fit as he entered the room. What an object met the sight of the compassionate stranger, as he drew nigh towards the bed on which Betty was seated, supporting in her arms the beautiful form of the once-happy Mary! During the distress occasioned by her illness, her cap had fallen off, and gave freedom to the long and silken ringlets of her rich brown hair, which fell in graceful curls over her pale face and snowy bosom, now partly exposed to the view of Mr. Graham, in consequence of Betty having untied the collar of her night-gown when she had fainted. The miniature of Monteith, which hung round her neck, was pressed to her heart with an energy which betrayed the excess of her fondness. It was observed by Mr. Graham; a sigh of generous pity escaped him, as he kissed her burning forehead,

then took the place of Betty, who, throwing a shawl over the shoulders of her mistress, respectfully retired into the next apartment.

"My child," said Mr. Graham, as he assisted Mrs. Byron to raise the pillows which supported her, "you know not the sorrow I experience in seeing you in this state. My heart has adopted you; I feel for you the affection of a father; why have you not confided in my word?—why have you thus given way to despair? I have just quitted Monteith; he is safe under my care; he is with me at my hotel; you have nothing to fear from his rashness."

Mary raised her eyes and hands to heaven in grateful thankfulness, and her head sunk on the venerable bosom of her protector. She would have spoken, but the power of utterance was denied her.

"Dearest Mary," said Mrs. Byron, fearing that she would again relapse into a state of insensibility, "are you not better now?—are you not more satisfied? Come, my sweet girl, look up; Heaven has heard

your prayer—Monteith has listened to the advice of your best friend."

Mary turned her eyes expressively on the sympathizing countenance of Mr. Graham; she took his hand, and pressed it to her heart—"You have saved my life," said she, in a faint voice; "I could not have existed another night uncertain of his fate. I judged of *his* distraction by my *own*."

"I will not deceive you, my child, in any thing," replied Mr. Graham; "as far as reciprocal affection can go, Donald is deserving of yours; he feels, as he ought, the sudden absence of such a being as yourself; but the poignancy of *his* feelings is in some degree assuaged by the vain, the fruitless hope of being able to resist the laws of his country. Your delicacy of mind, my child, has robbed you of this dangerous illusion; with *you* the severity of the blow, I hope, is nearly past. The Almighty has reserved to you your infant, and the same beneficent power will not fail to provide for him. To-morrow I will

see you again; let me find you more resigned."

Not wishing to be too long absent from Monteith, Mr. Graham now took his leave, and returned to the hotel, where he found his son-in-law busily employed in writing. He rose hastily at his entrance, and taking his hand, respectfully pressed it to his lips —"I am not deceived," said he, "in my suspicions. Tell me, my dear sir, have you not been to call on my adored Mary? Tell me, I beseech you, how she is, and if she does not reproach me as the destroyer of her happiness?"

"Compose yourself, Monteith," replied his father, "or you must not expect to hear from me the truth."

"I am composed; I am perfectly calm," said Donald, endeavouring to check the violence of his agitation.

"I have already told you, Monteith, that Mary and her child are under my protection. Did I not feel for her situation—did I not do all in my power to re-

lieve it, I should be unworthy the name of man."

"Oh that Heaven may shower down upon you its choicest blessings!" exclaimed Monteith in a trembling voice. "As the friend, the comforter of my Mary, you have a claim upon my heart—nay, even my life is at your disposal."

"My son," said Mr. Graham, laying his hand on the shoulder of Monteith, "I have only done the duty of a Christian. I have endeavoured, as much as lay in my power, to soften the justifiable anguish of an amiable and innocent young woman; I have tried to direct her thoughts to HIM who alone can enable her to endure the heavy calamity which has befallen her; I have sworn to be a father to her, and mine is no idle promise. Let the warm gratitude which now beams in all your features, teach you how best to reward my care; and let thy heart, which is so keenly alive to the woes of Mary, beat with generous sympathy for those of my equally-deserving Agnes."

Monteith cast his eyes on the ground. The mild forbearance of Mr. Graham pierced more deeply into his soul than the severest reproaches would have done—"Wretch that I am!" he exclaimed, in a tone of self-reproach; "why was I fated to give pain to so inestimable a friend? oh, my father! you gave to me existence only to make that existence a curse!"

"Say not so, Monteith. However rashly your father may have acted, yet he was influenced by the sole motive of securing, as he thought, your future happiness, by uniting you to a woman whose excellence he was so well acquainted with. If he has failed in his wish, judge not so harshly of his intentions. I and my daughter are equal sufferers with yourself, and yet we reproach you not."

"You are ever gentle, ever considerate," replied Monteith; "no bursts of passion, no stormy feelings, have ever yet disturbed the serenity of your mind's repose. I am not formed of such pure, ethereal mat-

ter, but am a creature subject to the extremes of pleasure and of pain. Yet think not, I beseech you, that I am insensible to the value of a disposition such as yours—no, sir; I have ever reverenced the gentle virtues you possess; but now I look on you as a being of the other world, as my preserving angel, as the guardian of all I hold dear on earth, as the saviour of my adored, my much-injured Mary. Oh, sir, if I have been led astray by the obstinacy of my own heart—if I have refused to acknowledge the legality of my forced marriage—if I have appeared insensible to the merits of Miss Graham, pardon me, I conjure you! the crime, on my part, was unintentional—the insult only the result of the indignation I have ever felt at my being betrayed by my family, of my being duped into the performance of their wishes."

"It has ever been a subject of the deepest regret, both to myself and Agnes," said Mr. Graham, "that such should have been the case; it has blighted the opening years of my beloved child—it has for ever

destroyed her happiness in this world; since not even your neglect, nor the insults she has been exposed to from your aversion and abandonment, have power to estrange you from her affections. Still does she plead for *him* who has made her an object of public notice, public censure."

Monteith, much affected, passed his hand over his forehead, unwilling that his father should be a witness to the tears which fell on his cheek—tears of love and unavailing repentance—"Best and worthiest of men!" he exclaimed, "as a sister, Agnes was dear to me. I esteemed the mild sweetness of her nature—I loved her as the chosen friend of my sisters; but my thoughts, my wishes, had never aspired to a closer connexion. I have not been insensible to the delicacy of her conduct towards me, since that fatal night—fatal to us both. Even in the encircling arms of her my soul most passionately adored, the image of the gentle, the unupbraiding Agnes, would cross my mind, and damp the ecstacy of my bliss. Once I believed her accessary to my being be-

trayed—now I think otherwise; I think her innocent, and equally deceived as myself. Yet what reparation can I offer for an involuntary crime? what atonement can I make to a woman of her sense and delicacy? what is the vain and empty name of wife, without the heart, the person of a husband?"

"We will talk of this another time," replied Mr. Graham; "will you consent to reside under the same roof with me—to place confidence in the purity of my intentions, to believe that I am influenced by the sincere desire of promoting your welfare, of restoring you to your birthright, and of enabling you to provide for those who have a *just* claim upon your fortune, I dare not say your affection?"

"What!" cried Monteith, furiously, "and has my father disinherited me? 'tis well! the path of glory at least is open for me—my sword shall cut my way through the world, in spite of the malice of my enemies."

"All that I have is yours, Monteith,"

replied Mr. Graham; "yours and Agnes. Your return to your family will be hailed as the signal of peace, and the restoration also of your father's love. In the mean time, however, will you grant my request?"

Monteith hesitated; respect for Mr. Graham made him unwilling to offend, yet he felt that with him he should not be perfectly his own master.

"You hesitate, my son; what do you fear? I wish not to do violence to your inclinations; I only seek to comply with the solemn request of Mary. She will be more tranquil if you remain with me."

Monteith gave his hand in token of submission. A desire of his Mary was a law which he held sacred, and he therefore consented to remain, at least for the present, with him who had so nobly befriended her; not, however, without a secret hope of being enabled very shortly to discover the retreat to which she had been conveyed.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day, when Mr. Graham was preparing to pay a visit to the lovely invalid, Monteith shewed a restlessness which his father too well accounted for. At length Mr. Graham took his hat; Monteith rose—he coloured—looked embarrassed and distressed—attempted to speak, and then reseated himself.

"What would you say, my son?" inquired the father of Agnes; "I am thy friend, thy parent; speak to me with confidence—I war not with human nature."

"Oh, sir, you are all goodness; I wish not to abuse it; but yet, if you would give this letter to my Mary, I think I should be more easy. I have not sealed it—you are welcome to peruse it."

Mr. Graham took the letter, and lighting a taper which stood near him, fixed his seal on the envelope—"I will grant thy

request," said he. "The world may perhaps condemn me, but I shall follow the dictates of my own conscience, which teaches me to 'do to others as I would they should do unto me.' The mother of thy infant, although the innocent rival of my daughter, deserves at least from thee, Monteith, all that thou hast to bestow, consistent with thine own honour. But promise me that I shall not repent my lenity, that you will not attempt to discover, by any secret means, the abode of Mary, and, in return, receive my word that no undue influence shall be exerted over her mind, that no force shall be employed to detain her; but that she shall be left free to follow her own inclinations, which, I am convinced, will be such as will deserve the high opinion I have formed of her."

Struck by the liberality of this proposal, and relying upon the tenderness of his Mary, Monteith assented to the terms—"Let me but be blest with one line," said he, "to assure me she is well, and that she forgives my having concealed from her my

fatal secret. Tell her—but why should I trouble you, my dear sir, when this letter will convey to her my sentiments. My dear Mrs. Byron also—when I am more collected, I will write to her; only tell her that I conjure her not to quit for a moment my adored wife."

"Miss Fitzroy, you mean," said Mr. Graham, mildly.

Monteith coloured, and felt reproved.

"Take this key, my son, it belongs to the little trunk in the window, and amuse yourself until my return. Remember I hold your word sacred." He then left him, and proceeded to the lodging which he had prepared for his adopted daughter.

Mary was lying on the sofa in the drawing-room, which opened into her bedchamber. By her side was placed her little cherub, who cooed and laughed, unconscious of the heavy misfortune which oppressed his parents. Mrs. Byron sat watching them, in melancholy silence; and the arrival of Mr. Graham gave a transient pleasure to them both.

After inquiring concerning the health of his *protegée*, and expressing his satisfaction at seeing her somewhat recovered, he then drew from his pocket the letter of Monteith, and presenting it to Mary, said —"I am commissioned by my son to be the bearer of this to you. Judge of my readiness to relieve *his* anxiety, and of my confidence in *your* honour, when I consented."

Mary tremblingly received it; a hectic flush crossed her fair cheek; she pressed the hand-writing of her beloved Donald to her lips, then placed it next her heart.

"Will you not read it now?" said Mr. Graham; "I promised Monteith to bring him back your own assurance of his being forgiven, and I would not disappoint him."

"Oh that I may possess the power to evince to you my gratitude!" replied Mary, in a tremulous voice. "Dearest, best of men! I know what you expect from me, but I am as yet too weak to make

any exertion; I know also that it will require all my firmness to peruse the letter of Monteith; but, alas! what will it not require to answer it! no, my dear sir, I am unable to open it now. To-morrow, or the next day, I may perhaps gain courage to get ready my reply."

"At least send him a line then, to convince him you are in being," said Mr. Graham.—"Where, my worthy Mrs. Byron, shall I find a pen and ink?"

Mary, however, tore a leaf from her pocket-book, and penciled down a few lines, pausing every moment to gain breath, and to wipe away the bitter tears which dimmed her eyes.

Meanwhile her smiling boy was seated on Mr. Graham's knee, twining his little fingers in the silvery locks which shaded his temples, or playing with the glittering watch which the kind old man was holding to his view. Every feature of the baby's face reminded him strongly of the beautiful countenance of his son-in-law—

an involuntary sigh escaped him—"What," said he unconsciously, "what will be the fate of this lovely boy!"

Immediately recollecting himself, he raised his head; but Mary was too deeply engrossed to hear his exclamation. Mrs. Byron, however, heard it, and replied softly —"What indeed! who shall supply to him the father he has lost?"

Mr. Graham expressively raised his eyes to heaven. She understood him, and felt reproved.

Mary now offered him the note, which she had finished, for his perusal.

"No, my dear child," said he, returning it; "I trust to your honour. Monteith paid me the same compliment, but I only fixed my seal to his letter. Sacred be your sorrows to your own bosoms."

"Such noble confidence," replied Mary, "can only be repaid by the same candour. I have promised, my dear sir, to be guided wholly by you and my dearest Mrs. Byron. It is your mutual advice and kind directions which alone can enable me to go

through the severe trial which yet awaits me. I wish for no concealment—I mean to lay my heart open for your inspection. Can I say more?"

"No, my dear Mary," replied Mr. Graham; "you have convinced me that it is worthy of all my confidence and love. The more I know of you, the more I see to praise and admire."

He then took the paper, and at her request, read it to Mrs. Byron. It merely contained expressions of her satisfaction at hearing that he was with his father-in-law, and a hope that he would be solely guided by the counsels of that excellent man. She assured him that she would reply to his letter probably the next day; but that she felt herself too unwell to open it before Mr. Graham. She concluded by assuring him, that although her resolution was unalterable to sacrifice herself, and her sole hopes of happiness, to the peace of Agnes, yet, while she continued to exist, her affections would remain unchanged. His child was well; and the

ind Mrs. Byron, with the faithful Betty, ere the companions of her misfortunes.

Mr. Graham placed the paper carefully i his pocket-book, and after some little ırther conversation, he rose to depart, first ıtreating Mary to accept of a bank-note ır her present wants. Mary assured him ıat his friendly offer was at that time un-ɔcessary, as she had sufficient money in ɛr possession to procure her all that was quisite—"When I am a bankrupt," said ıe, trying to force a smile, "I will apply my adopted father for a fresh supply."

"I hold your word sacred in every ing," replied Mr. Graham, embracing ɛr; "remember that *I* alone am to be ɔur banker."

Mary no sooner heard the closing of the reet-door, than she drew from her bosom e letter of Monteith, and gazing on it ith melancholy fondness, she pressed it peatedly to her lips, but wanted courage break the seal.

"Shall I leave you, my dear child?" in-

quired Mrs. Byron; "you may prefer being alone for a short time."

"No, my more than mother," replied Mary; "your presence can never be unwelcome to me. Stay and reanimate my sinking spirits—stay and point out to me my duty.—And thou too, my boy," she continued, raising the lovely infant to her breast; "even thy dear presence will be necessary to remind me that Heaven has not bereft me of *all I love*."

The smiling baby pressed its rosy lips to the white bosom of his mother, while with its dimpled fingers he sported with the golden chain which supported the miniature of his father.

The letter was directed, "*To Mary, the beloved, the adored wife of my choice.*" —"Alas!" she exclaimed, wiping away the ready tears, "thou art deceived, Monteith; thy Mary can no longer boast that dear, that sacred name. Thou art deceived, and I am adored in vain."

She paused for a moment, pressing her

son yet closer to her bosom, then broke the seal, which gave to her view the well-known characters of Monteith. Her humid eyes eagerly ran over the beloved lines, till dimmed by tears, she was obliged to stop, to breathe, and to wipe them from her sight. Again she took up the letter, and though agitated almost to fainting, she persevered until she had finished. Pressing it passionately to her lips, she held it to Mrs. Byron; then covering her face with her handkerchief, she sunk on the pillow of the sofa, by the side of her son, almost insensible to every thing but the absence of his father.

Mrs. Byron made many attempts to read the tender effusions of her favourite Monteith. The long-used spectacles were taken off, and rewiped several times; but the fault was in her moistened eyes, not in their glasses. At length, after much difficulty, she contrived to decipher the following epistle:—

"DEAREST AND BEST BELOVED MARY,

"The fatal secret is at last discovered, which has made me the most wretched of men. Yet, my adored wife, (for never shall another bear that name), do not condemn me unheard. Listen to the origin of my dishonour. If I am guilty, it is only in concealing from thy knowledge one action; and of that concealment excessive fondness on my part was alone the cause. I doubted not thy love, my Mary, I doubted not thy readiness to sacrifice thyself to my happiness; but I wished to save thee from the pang of believing it possible that any other but thyself had a claim to the *name* of Monteith. My heart, my person, must ever be thine.

"From the first dawn of my reason, I can remember that the hasty and severe nature of my father made my sisters and myself tremble at the sound of his footsteps. The tenderness of my mother dried our tears, and hushed our complaints. My father, notwithstanding his severity as a

parent, spared no expence on our education, neither did he restrict us from associating with the younger branches of those families who resided near his estate. That of Mr. Graham he was strongly attached to; of course his daughter became the friend and companion of my sisters, who all loved her with an affection which could only be satisfied by making me view her with the same partial eyes. My disposition, however, tinctured by romance, first taught me to feel that Agnes, amiable as she was, did not approach the standard of feminine perfection which my imagination had raised. I esteemed her as the chosen friend of my sisters—more was not in my power.

"As I grew up, my father adopted the wishes of my sisters, and spoke seriously of my becoming the husband of Miss Graham. Vexed at being thus readily disposed of by my family, I joyfully quitted home to join my regiment, glad of an opportunity of escaping from the persecutions of my sisters, and the silent but delicate tenderness of their friend.

"The death of my mother was the first blow to my happiness—it was followed by one still heavier. After an absence of fourteen months, I returned to my native country. I was received by my family with every demonstration of regard; and the friend and brother-officer who accompanied me, immediately became attached to Lilias, my eldest sister. This was perfectly agreeable to my father. My friend was a young man of family and fortune, so no objection could be made to his proposals. Agnes Graham was with us daily; her person, though not handsome, was interesting, and her figure gracefully elegant. My friend complimented me on my conquest, for Agnes was highly accomplished, highly amiable, and rich. Fortune had no effect on me, yet I strove to bend my disposition to yield to the united wishes of all my family, and of the good, the excellent Mr. Graham. Vain, however, was the attempt. No sooner did I begin to think of Agnes for a wife, than an unknown form of indescribable beauty swam

before my sight, and her image was soon obliterated by the loveliness which my fancy gave to the form and feature of my ideal goddess.

"We had yet a week to remain in Scotland. During this period Mr. Graham quitted home for Edinburgh, and Agnes resided wholly with us. It was on the birthday of Lilias that my fate was decided. All around me was happiness and joy; even Agnes became animated, as she played and sung some beautiful verses, written by my friend on the natal day of his betrothed. The music was composed by Agnes. Never had she appeared so amiable in my sight as at that moment, when the affection she felt for Lilias beamed in every feature, and gave to her person an appearance bordering upon the celestial.

"In the evening we had a ball. Agnes was my partner. She danced well. It was one of my favourite amusements: my spirits were heightened by the exhilaration of the

table, and I probably paid more attention than I was used to do, to the tenderness but too visible in the countenance of Miss Graham. At supper my father plied me with wine. I drank freely, unconscious that my destruction was planned. The lover of Lilias was also elevated. When about to separate for the night, my father, who was all life and gaiety, said, on seeing the arm of Douglas passed round the waist of my sister—'Wilt thou take this woman for thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony?' &c. Douglas assented with rapture; and he put the same question to my sister, who replied in the affirmative. My father then pronounced them man and wife, and we all joined in laughing at the silly, blushing countenance of Lilias. 'Come,' said my father, taking my hand, and joining it with that of Miss Graham, 'let me perform the same ceremony for Donald; you may then laugh at him.'

"So unexpected was the action of my

father, that I no sooner heard him declare that Agnes was my wife, and saw him embrace her as his daughter, than I felt a sudden chill come over me; my head grew giddy, and I should have fallen, had not Douglas caught me in his arms. More wine was brought me—I swallowed a large goblet—it completed my destruction; I became wild with its effects, and laughed and danced, unconscious even of what had passed.

"In this state I was conveyed to the chamber of Agnes——morning came! I awoke, and starting from the bed, flew to the apartment of my father. He tried to laugh at my emotions—to ridicule what he termed my false delicacy; seeing, however, that I was serious, he changed his manner, and eagerly demanded how I dared to complain of the means he had taken to ensure my future felicity? Agnes was now my wife as sacredly as if I had received her hand in the church.

"My reply was short, was decisive. I staid not to take leave of my sisters, or

to bid adieu to her who I deemed accessary to my being betrayed. I fled my father's house, burning with resentment, and vowing never to acknowledge the legality of an union into which I had been basely seduced. All applications to me were vain that came from my family. The letters of my sisters, who joined in my ruin, I returned unopened; those of Mr. Graham, whom I loved and respected, met with more attention.

"In the midst of dissipation and revelry I passed my time, until I saw you. It was then that I felt the magic of love, and the power of thy uncultivated beauties—it was then, oh best beloved, that my heart discovered its ideal goddess! Basely betrayed by my father, deeply injured in my prospects of happiness, my soul hung in trembling hope upon thee, and thee alone; I saw thy innocent attachment—I knew it capable of making me amends for the loss of every thing—I felt that with *you* I could endure every deprivation of fame and fortune—that, exiled from

society, thy presence alone would create to me a world—thy smiles, thy tenderness, thyself, would be my heaven! Never, Mary, shall they bring me to acknowledge the legality of that ceremony performed by my father. Let them consult the laws of Scotland—let them declare that Agnes is my wife—an empty name is all she will have to boast of. I am thine, dearest, sweetest Mary, thine for ever; no power can tear me from thy faithful bosom—no force bereave me of thy worshipped love. Oh, Mary! what have I not suffered since that night, when I returned impatient to thy arms, and found thee fled! Whom didst thou fly from, Mary? was it from thy Donald, from the father of thy adored boy?

"Oh, my soul's treasure, to *thee* I cling as to my only hope of earthly happiness —on *thee* I rely for the peace of my future life—to thy matchless tenderness I appeal for pardon. I have injured thee, my Mary —I have injured my child; yet thy heart will find excuses for his father. Return

then, oh, most adored! return to him who lives but for thee—return and bless me once again with thy endearing smiles! Have you not said, my Mary, that nothing should separate us? that you could bear any deprivation but that of my society? return then, dearest, to my arms! let us fly to some distant spot, where we may pass our lives unknown—where we may escape either the praise or censure of the world —where we may enjoy undisturbed the presence of each other, and devote our lives to the education of our soul's dearest blessing! Look, Mary, in the innocent face of my boy; let him plead for the errors of his father—errors which sprung alone from the excess of my passion for his mother. With what anxiety shall I wait your reply! Think, Mary, of all our past endearments —think of the days of bliss which we have spent with each other—think of those yet to come! oh, do not let a false notion of generosity tempt you to abandon me to my fate; on you, and you alone, depends the bliss or misery of my future years.

"What if the voice of my country decide against me; yet yours, my Mary, can never be raised but in my favour. If the laws of Scotland award to Miss Graham the right to assume my name, and share my fortune, they cannot compel me to reside under the same roof with her, they cannot influence either my heart or its affections; all that once was dear to you, my beloved, is still thine. Hasten then, my Mary, my chosen love, hasten and quell the fever which runs through my veins—hasten and assure me of thy forgiveness, of thy unchangeable affection! The life of thy Donald depends upon thy reply."

Mrs. Byron took off her spectacles, and laying them upon the table, cast a look of anxiety and doubt towards the couch.

Mary raised her head, and motioned for the letter, which, after she had pressed it to her lips, was again consigned to her bo-

som—" I am faint, very faint," said Mary, sinking back on her pillow. Some cold water revived her; and after giving way to a shower of tears, she felt less oppressed. Looking steadily in the sorrowing face of her venerable friend, she said—" Pray for me, dear Mrs. Byron, pray that I may have grace and resolution to overcome the tender pleadings of my heart—that I may have strength of mind to reply to the letter of Monteith, as duty, not as love, would prompt me."

" Alas, my child!" replied Mrs. Byron, " thy fate is indeed a hard one. Yet what would you have done had you lived to have become the object of Monteith's indifference and scorn—had you, like me, doted to excess on a faithless husband—had you, like me, been deserted for an ignorant, low-born domestic, and abandoned to every horror, to poverty, and ill-requited tenderness?"

Mary raised her languid head—" And have *you*, my kind, indulgent friend, experienced such misery?"

"Yes, my child, I have lived to witness the ruin of all that was dear to me—to close the dying eyes of my tenderest connexions—and in your distress to feel a renewal of what I once deemed insupportable. Perhaps, my child, the narration of my woes may teach thee to think lighter of thine own."

Mary knew this to be impossible; she nevertheless expressed a wish to hear the recital of afflictions which could be compared with those she was now suffering.

"It was my misfortune," said Mrs. Byron, "during my infancy, to become the favourite of my mother's sister; I say misfortune, because her partiality led her to propose adopting me for her own, which circumstance influenced all my future actions. My mother consulted what she thought my good, not her own inclinations. She had several daughters, and the delicate health of my father, who was rector of the charming little village of E—, made her alarmed lest we should too soon lose his protection and support; she there-

fore yielded to the entreaties of my aunt, and I accordingly accompanied her and her husband to Ireland, the birthplace of captain O'Niel.

"The kindness with which I was treated soon reconciled me to the separation from my family. Masters of the first abilities were engaged to perfect me in the different accomplishments, for all of which I shewed more or less a talent. Nature had refused to adorn my person with her various beauties, but she gave me a mind capable of attaining those of a higher order; she give me a ready wit, tempered by good humour—a persuasive eloquence, which gained me perhaps more admirers than mere personal charms—and a heart but too susceptible of an appearance of perfection in others.

"The house of my uncle was the general resort of his brother officers, among whom I had many lovers; but none had reason to complain of my conduct, since I behaved with the same polite indifference to all. My uncle and aunt rallied

me on my insensibility, yet gave me to understand that I was perfectly free to make my own choice, unless it should fall on one in any way related to the man who was the hereditary enemy of my uncle. As this was not likely to happen, I was permitted to make my own engagements, and to go where I pleased—a permission which was fatal to my peace.

"I had formed a strong attachment to the twin-sister of a gentleman who was in the same regiment with my uncle, and who resided with him and his wife, a most charming woman, at a delightful habitation not many miles distant from Dublin. They had occasionally passed a week or two with us, and I was allowed to accept of an invitation to stay a month with them in return. Little did I imagine that this visit was a prelude to all my misfortunes, and that it would give a colour to all my future life!

"My friends were gay and handsome; they enjoyed equal liberty as myself, and our time was spent in visiting the neigh-

bouring families, in music, dancing, and various other innocent amusements. I accompanied them one evening to a ball, given in consequence of the arrival of a young officer, cousin to the lady of the house, who had been pointedly kind to me during our short intimacy. I know not for what reason, but I had taken more pains with my dress than usual, and upon my entering the drawing-room of Mrs. Jackson, was complimented by her on the elegance of my appearance—'I have provided you with a partner, my dear Anna,' said she; 'I hope, therefore, that you are disengaged."

"More company coming in, now called off her attention from us, and we proceeded to the upper end of the room, where some ladies were seated who were known to my fair friends. On our approach, they immediately made places for us beside them, inquiring eagerly if we had been introduced to ensign Byron, the cousin of Mrs. Jackson, and indisputably one of the handsomest men in Ireland—'He comes

from a family equally famed for their beauty and their pride,' said one of the ladies; 'Lord help the woman fated to be his wife, unless she can bring them plenty of money to repair the old castle, and to pay off some of their long-standing mortgages!' —'It is positively dangerous,' said another, 'to be in company with young Byron; he is so exceedingly handsome, and so good-natured, that had I been single, I really should have lost my heart to him this morning, he is so unlike his father in every thing but his person.'

"My curiosity was now raised to behold this prodigy, and my eyes wandered amid the crowd in fruitless search of him. At length the animating strains from the ball-room called us to that spot. Here my friends were joined by the gentlemen to whom they were engaged, and in a few minutes Mrs. Jackson came towards us, followed by an officer, whom she introduced to me as ensign Byron, my intended partner. Never, until *lately*, have I seen a man that could compare with him in

beauty of features or in symmetry of form."

Mrs. Byron paused, to dwell for a moment on the remembrance of past happiness. The deep-drawn sighs of Mary at length awakened her from her reverie, and she continued—

"During the dance, my partner seemed to devote his whole attention to me, careless of the admiration he visibly excited in every female breast. Wherever he went, a whisper of praise ran through the circle, and I became the envy of all my companions, who deemed themselves fortunate if they could but feel the touch of his hand. His conversation soon became more agreeable to me than that of any other man, since he did not attempt to flatter my vanity, by praising me for what I did not possess, but, on the contrary, merely for those qualities of mind which, as I understood, Mrs. Jackson had kindly pointed out to his notice. The impression his beauty and his good sense made upon my heart was a lasting one, and I returned to the house of my friend full of his idea.

"Next morning he called to inquire after my health. His manners were equally fascinating as his person; and the whole family were so much delighted with him, that they gave him an invitation to a music-party for the next evening.

"Thus, my dear Mary, our intimacy commenced. Alas! how little could I then foresee that it would terminate so fatally! Old as I now am, I cannot look back upon that sweet season of my youth without feeling a pang of the bitterest regret. But, my dear child, you appear faint; shall I defer the continuation of my little history until another opportunity?"

"Proceed, my dearest friend," said Mary; "I am anxious to know the remainder. I think there is a similarity in our destinies."

"No, my Mary; there might in the commencement, but not in the termination, except that both of us were fated to lose the object of our best affections; the manner, however, bears no resemblance.—Byron's visits now became frequent; that he loved me *then* was certain; every action

testified the sincerity of his passion. My friends were all gratified at the prospect of my happiness, and I was advised to write home for permission to extend my visit a fortnight longer.

"This I acceded to with pleasure; at the same time mentioning to my aunt the new acquaintance I had formed, and the interest I felt in its continuance. Judge of my horror and mortification, when, by the next post, I received an immediate order to return, on pain of their eternal displeasure. Byron was the son of the man so much hated by my uncle, merely, as I afterwards discovered, because their fathers had been enemies from the time of their being together at college, and their sons had been brought up to cherish their unchristianlike animosity.

"No sooner did this order arrive, than I hastened to communicate my misfortunes to Mrs. Jackson, who had always been extremely partial to me. She wept at the discovery; and in the midst of our distress Byron entered, to whom she instantly dis-

closed the cause. All that faithful love could suggest was devised by him to assuage my sorrow; he told me that he was convinced the animosity was chiefly on the side of my uncle, and that he thought his father would easily be brought to terms of reconciliation. It was, however, necessary that I should obey the order of my aunt, which I am sorry to say I did most unwillingly, after settling with my beloved Byron the way in which our correspondence should be carried on.

"My uncle and aunt received me with their usual kindness. I saw, nevertheless, that I had nothing to hope from any alteration in their sentiments in favour of my lover, and this soon affected both my health and spirits. The month I had known Byron so firmly attached me to him, that I found it impossible to banish him from my mind, or even to deny his earnest entreaties that I would meet him clandestinely in the grove, a short distance from the house of my uncle. This meeting was fatal to my repose; I saw the man

on whom my heart doted kneeling at my feet—I heard his persuasive tongue plead, with the most irresistible eloquence, the ardour and constancy of his passion. My own bosom beat in unison with his, and I could not find courage to annihilate the hopes he had formed of my tenderness, and of my readiness to unite my fate with his. In a moment of blameable weakness, I consented to a private marriage, at which Mrs. Jackson and a friend of his were present. To you, my child, who know what it is to love with the truest affection, to you I need not attempt to describe my feelings on hearing myself called the wife of my beloved, my handsome Byron.

"Short, however, were my transports of joy. My uncle had been informed of my secret visits, and he taxed me with still countenancing an attachment which would render me an alien to his heart. It was then I wept, as I remembered all the kindnesses I had received from him. Gratitude, which was not quite extinct in my breast, impelled me no longer to de-

ceive him, and I acknowledged at once the extent of my disobedience. The consequence was obvious; I was banished from their society, and never again did I enter their hospitable walls. Even when misfortune pressed hard upon me, the only reply of my uncle was—'Let her thank herself; she has no one else to blame.'

"Mrs. Jackson received us with maternal kindness, and strove, by every friendly attention, to make me forget the fault I had committed; she undertook to break our marriage to Byron's father; but here again we met with a repulse. Let me, however, in this instance, do justice to the conduct of my husband, who acted towards me with all possible tenderness, and whose love made ample amends for the loss of my relations. We soon after embarked with his regiment for England, where my father and mother strove which should most testify their esteem for the man so dear to their daughter.

"Here I enjoyed every comfort, and

here I passed the happiest hours of my life, beneath the roof of my parents. The duties of Byron's profession made, however, his removal necessary, and I was too much attached to think of remaining behind; we therefore returned to London, where we continued until we separated for ever."

"Alas!" exclaimed Mary, "and have you then, my best friend, experienced that most dreadful of all calamities?"

"Yes, my dear child; but had it pleased Heaven to have blessed me with the sacred name of mother, my Byron would never have deserted me. Doting on children himself, it was always a source of uneasiness to him that he was not the father of a family. At first I tried to rally him out of his disquietude; but it only increased it. All that I could do was, therefore, to double my attentions towards him, hoping that my tenderness might make amends for his disappointment.

"At this time we had been married four years, when I thought I discovered

something highly improper in the behaviour of the servant we then had. She was a girl of a robust, coarse make, florid complexion, and country manners, extremely illiterate, for I believe that she could neither read nor write; from being humble in the extreme, she all at once assumed a forward pert air when I had occasion to find fault with her; and from being also plain in her dress, she now wore clothes much above her situation, which alarmed me for the girl's welfare, lest she should have got into some bad connexion, that might end in her ruin. Upon my mildly questioning her as to the means by which she became mistress of them, and gently reproving her for having disobeyed my orders, she replied, with great insolence, that she would not stay another day in the house; that she could please her master well enough, but that I was never satisfied, and that I might do the work myself for what she cared; she should not go to service again.

"Surprised and shocked by such unex-

pected impertinence, from a woman who ought to have been most grateful to me, I instantly desired her to leave me. She however refused to do so until her master came home, as she should speak to him first.

"Confounded by this fresh insolence, and scarce knowing what to think, I waited with feverish impatience the return of Byron, to whom I immediately complained of Sarah's conduct.

"She was listening in the passage all the time; and upon his wishing me to attribute it solely to her ignorance, broke into the room with exultation, crying—'You see, madam, all that you can do will never set my master against me. I told you so; but I don't care; I won't stay another night in the house unless he asks me.'

'Sarah,' said my husband, with a look I shall never forget, and which brought conviction instantly with it, 'Sarah, leave the room! I will not suffer either you or any one else to insult Mrs. Byron. Go

directly! I will be obeyed! Pack up your things, and I will pay your wages.'

"She left the room, muttering something which my agitation would not allow me to hear distinctly. It was with difficulty that I could restrain my indignation, yet I permitted him to quit me for a few moments, during which time I suppose he settled where she was to go, for she left the house immediately. I was now too well convinced of the fatal reason which had produced such an alteration in the once humble and grateful Sally.

"From this time I perceived a visible change in the behaviour of my husband; he was often from home, sometimes whole nights, and when he returned, he appeared embarrassed and unhappy; yet he continued to behave to me with the semblance of affection, often expressing his admiration of my virtues as a wife, only regretting that our union had not been as happy as he had wished, since he considered children as the best gift of Providence;

and that whatever woman it might be, no matter her condition in life, if she bore him a child, he should consider himself bound to her by every tie of the strongest attachment.

"This continual disquietude gave me serious alarm. All my hopes of happiness now appeared to be fast receding from me; and I felt the agonizing fear of losing in time the affections of my Byron. His regiment was ordered back to Ireland, where I was preparing to accompany him, and anticipating the pleasure I should enjoy in the society of my dear Mrs. Jackson, when I was petrified at his desiring me to remain in London, since my journey would only increase his expences; and it would be better for me to pay a visit to my mother, who was now a widow, than follow him to a place where it would not be agreeable for me to reside. In vain I urged my affection for himself, my wish to see Mrs. Jackson, and my dislike to remaining behind; he was resolute, and I was compelled to obey. I saw him de-

part, with a sad foreboding. The coldness of his kiss—the hurried manner of his adieu, too well betrayed the little share I retained in his heart.

"He had not been long absent, when I received a letter from his cousin, reproving me for not accompanying my husband, and hinting that it might be productive of very disagreeable consequences, at the same time conjuring me to tell her if I had any reason to complain of his neglect. I immediately wrote to her in confidence. Her answer gave the final blow to my repose. Mr. Jackson had called on Byron unexpectedly, and found him at breakfast with a young woman, who had an infant at her breast, and who Byron wished him to believe was the wife of one of the men, who had called for his linen, and whom he had asked to stay and make his tea. She had herself no doubt of this being the very Sally who had behaved to me with so much insolence; and she advised me to come over, and reside with

her. Ah, my dear Mary, what would you have done when informed of this cruel circumstance?"

"I should have sunk under it," she replied in a faltering voice. "I am confident I should have died under the idea of being viewed with indifference by Monteith."

"I thought the same," said Mrs. Byron; "it had such an effect upon my health, that it was three months before I was able to leave London; and when I arrived at my dear Mrs. Jackson's, she hardly knew me, so deeply had it altered my appearance. I came only to endure fresh mortification. The regiment was ordered for foreign service, and I only saw Byron two days before he embarked. Highly incensed at my disobedience, he no longer thought it necessary to keep up a false shew of affection. He owned that Sarah had been kept by him ever since she had left me; that she had borne him a son, and that he would never abandon her while she was faithful to him; that she

and her child were to accompany him abroad, and that the wisest thing I could do would be to return to my mother, and live upon what he could afford to allow me, or else turn to advantage those talents which nature had given me. Seeing me almost senseless in my chair, he assured me that he should ever speak and think of me with the highest esteem; and had I been so fortunate as to have made him a father, he should have been the happiest man living. He then left me abruptly, and returned to her who had no pretensions whatever to retain the affections of such a man as Byron, except that of having borne him a child.

"My distraction was so great, that my kind friend, Mrs. Jackson, fearing the consequences, never left me for a moment. I was, in fact, almost mad, yet resolutely determined to follow my husband, at the peril of my life. The regiment embarked while I was in this dreadful state; contrary winds detained the ships for some time; I watched my opportunity, when

it was supposed I slumbered, and hurrying on my clothes, stole softly out of the house, making my way to the stable, over which a lad slept, to whom I had done several little acts of kindness.

"The youth, at my earnest entreaties, got ready a horse, offering to accompany me himself to the seaside, where I might procure a boat. We rode hard until we reached the place of our destination. The faithful boy would not leave me; he followed me to the side of the ship which contained the idol of my soul. Here I was received by the captain, who, upon my telling my name, conducted me into his cabin, and behaved to me with fatherly attention. He advised me to relinquish all idea of seeing Byron, as it would only expose me to insult and mortification, since the woman who was with him passed for his wife, and it was evident that he was not only led by her in every thing, but was actually strongly attached to her.

"I listened to his friendly counsels with silent despair. I prayed to Heaven to take

me from the world, to end my sufferings, which at that moment seemed greater than I could bear. The worthy captain sincerely pitied my affliction, and said all in his power to console me; he was even so kind as to accompany me back to the shore, and to see me safe in a postchaise, which he directed to drive with all possible dispatch to Mrs. Jackson's, for I had lost all power to give orders, or even to sit without support.

"Fortunately for me, a woman was going close to the estate of Mr. Jackson, and she volunteered to see me safe into the care of my friends. I was too ill to remember what passed at the time; but I have heard my dear Mrs. Jackson describe the horror she felt when it was discovered that I had flown. My return was hailed by her and her family with tears of joy, and every thing done to soften the poignancy of my anguish that attentive love could invent. Time, my dearest Mary, and change of scene, have worn off the keen edge of my griefs. I am now arrived at that period

of life when the feelings are partly blunted. Experience and religion have convinced me what "dust it is, when 'tis man we dote on."

Mary dropped her handkerchief from her face, which was moistened by her tears —"What, my dear mother," said she, "became of Mr. Byron? did you never see him afterwards?"

"Never, my child. He continued abroad several years, during which time I lost my dear Mrs. Jackson; she died in my arms, leaving me once more a prey to the deepest sorrow. I then quitted Ireland, and returned to England. It was now that I resolved to make use of what talents I might possess, and accordingly went as governess to the daughters of a nobleman, whose esteem and respect I was so fortunate as to preserve as long as he existed. With them I travelled into most of the countries of Europe, sharing at once their confidence and affection. While with them, I heard of the death of Byron; and though he had voluntarily abandoned me,

yet I could not forget how dear he had once been. All his errors were buried with him, and I only retained the remembrance of our former tenderness. When I was obliged to leave my amiable pupils, I returned for awhile to my widowed parent, and here I became acquainted with your beloved mother. In her society I experienced a revival of all my youthful affections. I loved her most dearly; and her loss was the chief reason of my once more leaving home. Again I became a governess, and continued in the same family for some years, until some disappointments I met with from those with whom I resided, determined me to retire, and live upon what I possessed.

"Thus, you see, my dear Mary, that I have had my share of the misfortunes of this world; yet, thank God, I still retain my health, and all my faculties unimpaired, and I mean, such as I am, to devote the remainder of my days to your peace and comfort."

Mary affectionately embraced her. "A time, I hope, will come," said she, "when I may prove myself not wholly unworthy of this generous attachment—this benevolent determination. At present I am poor, even in words; but you know my heart."

CHAPTER IV.

Monteith awaited the reply of Mary with feverish impatience. Love taught him to hope that it would be favourable to his wishes, and he counted the tedious moments of Mr. Graham's absence with restless inquietude. The key yet remained in his hand, and he resolved to open the box which was to afford him amusement. It contained a few books by the best authors, and a portfolio of exquisite drawings, some of them original. Underneath a beautiful landscape of mountain scenery

was penciled the following lines, from Charlotte Smith's novel of Celestina:—

"Even in a scene so desolate and rude,
I could with THEE for months and years be blest;
And of *thy* tenderness and love possest,
Find all *my* world in this wild solitude."

Monteith gave an involuntary start; the drawings were executed by Agnes—the characters were hers also; who could she allude to but himself? again his eyes wandered over the masterly representations of his native scenery; the lines were new to him—they accorded with his own feelings, which beat in unison with those of the fair transcriber. What place could be so barren, but that Mary's smile would have power to enliven? the thought of her tenderness, her matchless affection for himself, her agony on hearing that he had deceived her, called forth the tears of bitter self-reproach.

"Alas!" he exclaimed, "into what misery have I now plunged my adored Mary! how is that dear bosom agitated by despair,

which I have sacredly shielded from even the shadow of evil! Poor Agnes! and art thou miserable—thou who art the innocent cause of all my anguish? and dost thou still cherish the remembrance of him who abandoned thee without remorse to eternal widowhood? poor Agnes! from thee at least I have not deserved this proof of constancy and attachment."

It was one of those unaccountable impulses of nature which often occur to a noble mind, that prompted Monteith to select from the rest the view which contained the lines applicable to himself. Hearing the voice of Mr. Graham on the stairs, he closed the box, and hastened to receive him.

"My son," cried the worthy man, "I do not bring you an answer to your letter, but merely a few lines, which, at my request, my new favourite sends to soften down your disappointment. To-morrow you will probably receive her reply."

Monteith hastily opened the little note; he read and re-read it; then kissing it with

fervor, pressed the hand of Mr. Graham to his lips in token of his gratitude—"All that I fear," said he, "is, that my Mary should sink under this unexpected blow, or that my poor baby should lose its natural nourishment, and fall the first victim to the cruelty of its father."

"Fear not for either, my son," replied Mr. Graham; "innocence such as theirs must ever be the peculiar care of Providence. Miss Fitzroy and her son shall never want a father while I exist."

"And what, my best friend, is there to prevent my fulfilling that sacred office myself? who has so great a right? to whom can Mary and her infant look up with confidence, if not to me, me, their natural, their lawful protector? Pardon, thou must excellent of men, I conjure you, my warmth, my freedom of speech; but granting that the legality of my fatal marriage is established, Mary is yet mine. They cannot compel me to resign her. Oh, where is the heart capable of forming such a wish? where exists the philosophic mind that

could coldly argue upon such a point as this?"

"Mary must herself decide," replied Mr. Graham, "upon the delicacy and propriety of continuing under the protection of a married man. She is free to act as she thinks fit; I have passed my word to be merely an adviser between you. To-morrow you will most likely hear her decision. But how have you passed your time since I left you this morning? have you been amused with any thing my trunk contains?"

Monteith coloured, and replied in the affirmative; then changed the conversation, wishing to avoid as much as possible the name of his deserted wife. During that day he strove to appear composed; he first read, then played at chess with his father, who narrowly watched all the changes of his handsome features; till wearied with the part he was forced to act, he retired early to his bed-room, where he passed the night feverish and unhappy.

Morning came; he joined his father pale

and unwell; he longed, yet dared not ask when he intended to visit his beloved Mary, till Mr. Graham, who well imagined what were the feelings of his son, informed him that he should delay it until evening, that Miss Fitzroy might have time to make any alteration that might occur to her during the day.

Monteith acceded to this idea, yet he could scarcely support himself while at the dinner-table; and Mr. Graham, who saw his increasing emotion, and the strong indications of approaching illness, endeavoured to persuade him to send for a physician.

Monteith shook his head; he was not in need of one, he said; but the burning crimson of his cheek, and the heaviness of his fine eyes, too well betrayed the falsity of his words.

When Mr. Graham, after looking at his watch, rose to depart, Monteith's agitation increased; he rose likewise, and taking his hand, said—"You are going to my Mary: I will endeavour to await your

return with composure; yet what have I to fear from the decision of a heart all my own! my best friend—my more than father—what do I not owe to your kindness, your forbearance, your affection! I hold your word sacred as holy writ, yet I tremble lest your advice, and that of Mrs. Byron, should influence the will of Mary. Tell me, I beseech you, what do you think will be her reply? will she not return to me?"

"You are not in a state of mind, my dear son, to hear my opinion. Should the determination of Miss Fitzroy be such as I conjecture, I shall even fear lest you should commit some rash action, which will only increase, rather than diminish her affliction."

"What do you fear?" inquired Donald; "surely, my dear sir, you cannot think me so cowardly as to commit suicide? no, I have enough to account for to my Maker, without *that* crime. To-night decides my fate for ever!—it either restores me to the arms of one who must and will be ever

the first in my affections, or it consigns me to a life of eternal misery; it exiles me from all I hold dear on earth, and casts me on the world a wanderer and a wretch!"

"I hope not, my son; I hope that you will try to bear with firmness becoming a man and a Christian, what it may please God to be your lot; 'to bear is to conquer our fate.' Farewell, my dear Monteith; strengthen your mind during my absence with supplications to the throne of Mercy—fortify your heart by prayer against the allurements of youthful passion—try to drown all selfish considerations in the reflection, that although you have erred, it is not too late to repent; and 'he who by repentance is not satisfied, is not of heaven nor earth."

When Mr. Graham arrived at the abode of Mary, he was received only by Mrs. Byron, who said, as she returned his friendly pressure of the hand—"My friend, you will excuse our dear child from giving you this letter herself. She is not able to see even *you;* yet I trust in God that

she will soon be sufficiently composed to speak to you on a subject which must ever be nearest her heart. Read her reply to Monteith, then tell me if she does not deserve a happier fate."

The father of Agnes took the letter in silence. Though convinced, by what Mrs. Byron had just said, of Mary's virtuous resolutions, he nevertheless trembled to peruse her answer, well knowing how deeply she must have suffered while she was composing it. In many parts her tears had nearly effaced the words; and the unevenness of the lines, the irregularity of the letters, too plainly betrayed the anguish of the lovely writer. It was as follows:—

"DEAREST AND BEST BELOVED MONTEITH,

"What a task have you not imposed on one whose heart, still throbbing with the tenderness of a wife, a mother, no longer dares to address you in the language of the former sacred and idolized

name! Yes, Monteith, I still exist, though I have lived to be torn from thy embrace, and to bring myself to acknowledge the necessity of our separation.

"What, Monteith, is it you ask of me? what ought *you* to require of Mary Fitzroy? oh, think not that I reproach you, my Donald! alas! no longer *mine*. Cruel tears! why do you stream at a moment when I require even more than human fortitude? Donald, I dare not, cannot comply with the wishes of your heart, of that heart which ought, in justice, to belong to Agnes. Love the most ardent, the most refined, first prompted you to bestow on me a name which you vainly imagined you had the power to bestow. Would you have loved me with the same purity of affection, the same idolatrous fondness, had I been your mistress? oh no, Monteith! the passion which first warmed your bosom would have degenerated into mere sensual attachment, since you could not *esteem* the woman who would voluntarily become the object of

public and of private censure. To that love I now appeal for my justification. The time is gone by when I could fly to meet the fond caresses of my HUSBAND—when I could gaze with innocent rapture on his heavenly countenance, and feel myself sanctioned to pour out all my soul upon his bosom—those days of bliss are past! Providence has thought fit to put an end to the exquisite happiness I once enjoyed. I only dreamt of thee and endless love—I now awake to a sense of misery almost too keen for me to endure.

"Once, Monteith, in the frenzy of despair, I raised my impious hand against my life—thy sword was already pointed at my breast, when the cry of our child saved his distracted mother. I now live but for him. I have promised to my dear Mrs. Byron to atone, if possible, for the crime I meditated, by sacrificing all personal considerations for his good.

"They have robbed me of thee, Monteith, of all that I adored, of all that made life desirable or valuable! Pardon, oh Hea-

ven, this rashness! Have I not still my child—the child of Monteith? Spare him, Donald, spare him to his widowed mother—to that mother who solemnly swears to devote herself to his welfare, and to bring him up to venerate his father with the same fervor as she does herself.

"The most rigid virtue will not criminate me for this. I yield to the severity of my destiny—I relinquish all claim on the husband of Agnes; but the father of my boy must ever be dear to me. Fear not, Monteith, for our future welfare—my conduct shall prove that I am worthy to be the guardian of our child—that I am worthy not only of thy past affection, but of thy future confidence and respect. I shall reside with Mrs. Byron. My wants will be few—they *must* be supplied by my own industry. In three years I shall be of age, and Mrs. Scorpion can no longer withhold from me the legacy of my uncle. Through the medium of Mr. Graham, you will be informed of my safety, and of the health of our son. He is one of the best

of men—I venerate and admire him as I would a father. I bend submissively to his parental counsels, and acknowledge myself his debtor. The daughter of such a man must be amiable—she too has suffered from thy father's cruelty.

"Monteith, you must recompense her for her patient forbearance—you must do her justice. Suffer not your fondness for me to counteract the goodness of your nature. Never in this world must we meet again! Respect the delicacy of Agnes—respect my wounded pride; do not suffer our names to be brought into a court of justice. Oh, spare, spare me the humiliation of seeing mine in public print—of hearing myself the topic of common conversation, common pity, or common censure! be just, dearest Monteith, to Agnes—to your own character; let *me* pass unnoticed in the world; I dread its scorn more than death.

"For my sake, Monteith, make no appeal to the laws of your country. Think that I am lost to you for ever; think of

the exalted conduct of Mr. Graham—of his goodness to us both—of his parental kindness towards myself—of his forbearance—and of his daughter's virtues! Exiled from my society, you can no longer dispense life and rapture around me by your presence and your smile, yet you can restore peace to my aching bosom, by relieving the woes of Agnes. She is your wife, Monteith; oh, do not reject her supplications—do not refuse to restore her to her lawful rank in society—do not stifle the voice of honour, of your own conscience. By that love which was once my glory and my pride, let me conjure you, Monteith, to return to Scotland—to heal the wounds which have been so long bleeding—to restore peace to the generous heart of Mr. Graham—and to make his daughter the most fortunate, the most enviable of women.

"Thus far has duty, and the consciousness of moral rectitude, sustained me. My resolution is unalterable, though my heart, Monteith, is unchanged. Think not, I be-

seech you, that any other cause on earth could have power to separate me from you. Think of my unbounded affection, which even now is undiminished, which has stood proof against the suggestions of female pride, of wounded honour—think of my undying tenderness, then judge of my sufferings as I write—*we must meet no more!* The ready tears which fall would vainly attempt to efface the dreadful words. Alas! alas! how vain! Living or dying, my soul will ever cling to thy image—never, oh never! shall it be removed from my bosom—Agnes cannot demand *this* sacrifice from me; but mine, Monteith, must no longer rest upon thy faithful breast—it would be an insult to thy wife. Return it, then, to me. I will treasure it for our boy—I will give it him when he is old enough to know how sacred it was to his father. Monteith, our misfortunes will render us doubly dear to our child; he will reverence the virtuous feelings which divided his parents—he will weep for our sufferings, but he will respect them.

I can no more—the weakness of my body overcomes my mental firmness; I would be more than mortal—I find I am a mere woman.

"Once more I resume my pen; but what have I to add—what can I say, that your heart, Monteith, is not already informed of? yet I would fain entreat of you to bear with fortitude *our* heavy and almost insupportable separation—I would remind you of the pleasing task you have to perform, in restoring an amiable woman, who loves you, to peace and happiness, and of rendering the life of her father happy also. That father must direct you, Monteith—oh, listen to his gentle, his soothing consolations! Ah, how much I stand in need of them myself, at this moment!"

"At the request of our beloved Mary I take the pen. Oh, Monteith, my favourite, my misguided favourite, how my

heart bleeds for *you*, for *her!* If ever Mary was deserving thy love, thy adoration, she now is doubly so, since she has sacrificed to virtue and to Agnes him whom she idolizes. Venerate her for the victory she has gained—imitate her glorious example. She has lost the charm of her existence, but she has gained the approbation of the wise, the good. Dearest Monteith, we shall hardly exist until we see your father again—until we hear from him that you yield to the noble resolution of Mary, and that you have acknowledged the lawful claims of Agnes. I will live and die with Mary—I will never desert her. Heaven will protect and bless her; she will never want a friend; and though circumstances forbid your ever seeing again my adopted child, yet Mr. Graham will think of some method to enable you to behold and embrace your son. Farewell, Monteith, farewell for ever! May Heaven enable you to bear up against this terrible, this unlooked-for affliction, is the prayer

of her who cannot refrain from still calling herself your affectionate friend,

"ANNA BYRON."

"Well, my dear sir," said Mrs. Byron, on perceiving that he had concluded the letter, "what is now your opinion of my Mary? is she not an angel?"

"She is indeed," replied Mr. Graham, visibly affected by the perusal of her reply. "She is a being capable of inspiring the noblest passion—a being not to be easily forgotten. Alas, my friend! dear as my own daughter is to my heart, yet I cannot help feeling that Mary is her superior, and that it is impossible that Monteith should ever relinquish the hope of continuing to be master of her fate. Still, for the happiness of us all, her residence must not be discovered to him. Should they meet, it would be a dreadful trial to poor Mary, as well as to my son."

"I tremble at the thought," said Mrs.

Byron. "Not for the world would I expose her to such an event. As soon as she is a little recovered, I propose to remove her to the house of a friend of mine, a short distance from town, as change of air will be necessary both for herself and the infant."

"You are perfectly right, my dear madam; and let me entreat of you to draw upon me for whatever sum you may require. It is my wish to persuade Monteith to return with us to Scotland, to be reunited to his family; but I shall not urge this, if I find it particularly irksome to his feelings. The first step is to reconcile him to his wife; it is then immaterial what spot he may chuse to reside in. This letter, though it is every thing that I could wish, makes me shudder when I reflect on the agony it will occasion him. Alas, my dear madam, what misery has not one rash action brought on us all! You must exert all your eloquence to sooth the harrassed mind of Mary, while I watch over my unhappy son. I may not be able to see

you for several days. I will not conceal from you my suspicions. I expect that Monteith, who is now labouring under a nervous fever, will suffer considerably upon the receipt of this; and I shall therefore call on doctor Malvern on my way home, to request his attendance this evening. You shall not, however, be ignorant of what is passing; my servant, Malcolm, has lived with me from his youth, and is trustworthy—him will I send once or twice a-day, with a note to inform you of the health of Monteith. Tell our dear Mary that she will remain in my thoughts, and that I hope soon to embrace her. Tell her, also, that she has acted nobly, but not more so than I expected."

Saying this he took leave of Mrs. Byron, and returned slowly to the hotel. First going to the chamber of his daughter, to whom he could not forbear shewing the letter of her innocent rival—"Read this, Agnes," he cried; "it will convince you, more than any words of mine, of the mind and principles of Miss Fitzroy. I

have not overrated her merits. Read it, Agnes—she is worthy of your warmest friendship."

Mrs. Monteith took the letter from her father; but she had not read many lines before her tears and sobs obliged her to pause. With difficulty she proceeded—her emotions increased almost to fainting—"Oh, my father!" she exclaimed, kissing his moist cheek, "how can I ever expect to find favour in the sight of Monteith, after he has known such a woman as this? Generous, angelic Mary! and is it for me that you have resigned the treasure of Monteith's affection? dear father, I have been wrong in delaying my visit; I will go to-morrow—I will thank and bless her on my knees; I shall not sleep until I have seen her. How can I ever make her amends for the sacrifice of all she holds dear?"

"Her reward must come from above, my Agnes," said her father; "but your tenderness, my child, may help to assuage her anguish. Go, my dear Agnes, to-mor-

row; you shall be the bearer of a note from me to that best of women, Mrs. Byron. She will introduce you to Miss Fitzroy, and your own heart, my love, will then require no prompter. Give way to the natural kindness of your disposition—you can never meet with an object more deserving of your friendship and affection."

"And yet, my father, I would not be thought to obtrude myself on her notice —to force myself into her presence. May she not deem me indelicate in requesting to see her at a moment like the present?"

"No, my child, your manners will preclude the possibility of such a supposition; while your *not* calling may lead Mary to imagine that you do not possess that nobility of soul which would enable you to seek the friendship of so dangerous a rival."

"Well then, my father, since I have your sanction for my visit, I need not be afraid to meet the eyes of the worthy Mrs. Byron. I cannot, however, think of going to rest, until I hear from you what effect

this letter may have on my unhappy husband. Do not leave him, my father; but send Malcolm to my chamber with a message, before you retire for the night."

Mr. Graham embraced his daughter tenderly; he held her for a few minutes to his bosom; then, as if conscious that he was equal to the task, he quitted her apartment for that of Monteith.

"You have been long, my dear sir," said his son, in a languid voice, while the deep crimson of his cheek denoted his increasing fever; "very long indeed," he added, with a sigh. "Have you brought me a letter from my beloved Mary?"

"I have," replied Mr. Graham; "but, my dearest Donald, you look unwell. I fear that you are not sufficiently prepared to receive the reply to your letter."

Monteith turned pale; he became so agitated, that Mr. Graham was obliged to support him—"You know the contents," said Monteith, scarce able to breathe; "best and dearest of friends, let me hear from your lips my doom." He sunk on

he shoulder of his father, and again his ace became flushed.

"My son," said his venerable supporter, I grieve to see you thus. I had hoped hat you would have suffered your reason, ay, your affection for Mary, to have aught you what ought to be the reply of a virtuous woman to your proposal. I ave not seen Miss Fitzroy; she was unble to see me this evening, and I respected er sorrow too much to wish it. My son, ou must learn courage and fortitude from his heroic, this noble-minded young creature; she has set an example worthy of imitation, worthy of herself."

Monteith gasped for breath. With difficulty he exclaimed—"All hope then is lost! I feel that Mary has abandoned me!" Then putting his hand to his burning forehead, he said, "I am tranquil, my dear sir; I am now capable of reading her answer."

Mr. Graham, though much alarmed by his appearance, nevertheless presented him with the letter of Miss Fitzroy.

Monteith received it with an unsteady hand; his dimmed eyes rested on the well-known characters; he pressed it to his parched lips with mingled love and fear, then hastily tore open the envelope with a sort of desperate courage, determined at once to know his fate. Mr. Graham watched every movement of his features with alarm and sympathy; he saw the convulsive changes of countenance, as the cold drops of perspiration stood on his forehead; every limb writhed with agony; yet he went on until he had concluded the letter of his beloved Mary. Folding it up with care, he placed it next his heart, then giving his hand to Mr. Graham, he said—"Do not let my father or my sisters take it from me; let it be buried with me; I feel that I shall not long survive the cruelty of my Mary. My dear sir, have I not courage now?—have I not read her letter, and yet I still dare to live?"

"My dear son," replied Mr. Graham, still more alarmed at his apparent composure, "you must not call Mary cruel; she

has suffered, and still suffers acutely; her heart remains faithful, remains unchanged; nay, does not every line of her letter betray her undiminished tenderness? She has acted from principles of duty and justice; she has risen superior to the selfish considerations of personal gratification. That letter cost me many tears in perusing, while you, my son, seem unmoved."

Monteith looked steadily in the face of Mr. Graham—"You are the friend, the adviser of Mary; yet had she loved me as I once fondly believed, even your persuasions would have had no power over her mind. Alas! could I ever have supposed that Mary, who seemed to live only in my presence, whose very being appeared to be entwined with my own; that Mary could consent to our separation—that Mary could refuse to share my fortune—that she could renounce all claim upon the father of her child? Oh, my foolish heart, where now is thy idol, thy adored?—where now the promised hours

of confidence and love! Abandoned by her for whom alone I wished to live—deserted by the chosen of my soul—disappointed in all the fond visions of future bliss—robbed of my infant's smiles, and of his filial tenderness—what now is left to console me for this wreck of all that is valuable? what but the bitter sense of departed rapture—what but the stings of self-reproach, of misplaced love!" He covered his face with his hands in evident emotion, which shook his whole frame.

All was silent, for Mr. Graham respected his affliction, and forbore to utter what in the present state of his distress would be useless.

"You will see Mary again," said Monteith, with increasing feebleness; "tell her then, from me, that I submit to her wishes, as the last sad proof of my eternal passion—that I will not reproach her for resigning me—that I consign to her care the pledge of *my* love, since it is her request. She has broken my heart, but I

cannot inflict a wound on hers; she has shortened the term of my existence, yet I would fain make hers still valuable."

Mr. Graham could only press his hand affectionately.

Monteith continued—"Best of men, I know your value. I do not believe that any undue influence has been exerted to persuade Mary to abandon me. Perhaps she is right; but in sacrificing me to the rigid notions of virtue and honour, she has consigned to the tomb a man who loved her to an excess of tenderness, and who, while he continues to live, must also continue to idolize her memory."

He drew the letter from his bosom, and again perused it—"Inhuman!" he exclaimed; "was it not enough to rob me of thyself, without demanding back thy image? Oh, Mary, Mary, this is more than I am able to perform. Never will I resign this sacred treasure; even in death will I press it to my heart, and in the grave it shall be my companion."

Exhausted, he sunk inanimate into the

arms of Mr. Graham, who with difficulty supported him until Alex and Malcolm came to his assistance.

While they were conveying him to his bed, doctor Malvern arrived, and after some time had elapsed, at length succeeded in recalling him to life; he was, however, so completely debilitated, as to be insensible to who were about him, while the violence of the fever still raged with unabated fury. He talked of his Mary and her child, screaming aloud that his father was murdering them, and would have leaped out of bed, had not the weakness of his limbs prevented him.

Mr. Graham was deeply affected by his situation; he saw that the curiosity of the physician was excited, and he judged it prudent to inform him of the real cause of his patient's illness. Leaving Monteith to the care of the two faithful domestics, he led the doctor into the sitting-room, and in a few words enabled him to form a judgment of the extent of his son's danger.

Doctor Malvern was a man of great

skill as well as humanity; he felt highly interested in the fate of Monteith, and respected the generous and noble mind of his father-in-law. After writing a prescription, and giving his opinion respecting the treatment of the invalid, he took leave of Mr. Graham, promising to make the hotel his first place of call on the following morning.

CHAPTER V.

THE extreme agitation produced by the exertion which Mary had made, in replying to the letter of Monteith, joined to the enfeebled state of her health, made it necessary that her infant should be weaned. Painful as this appeared to poor Mary, she nevertheless immediately consented to it, lest her darling should be injured by continuing to receive his accustomed nourishment from her bosom. He was accord-

ingly consigned to the care of Betty, who loved him very nearly as much as his fond mother, and to whom the child was strongly attached.

Mary, after she had written the letter which was to annihilate all hope in the breast of Monteith, scarce opened her lips; she seemed lost to every thing around her; and when her child no longer remained in her chamber, she sunk into a stupor, which terrified Mrs. Byron, and made her fear lest it should affect her senses. With difficulty she had prevailed on her to swallow some chocolate, and was sitting, with tearful eyes, watching the pale countenance of her once-beautiful favourite, when Betty entered the apartment, under pretence of fetching something; meeting the look of Mrs. Byron, she motioned for her to follow her into the drawing-room, whispering to her at the same time that a lady wished to speak to her.

Mrs. Byron no sooner beheld the tall and elegant form of Agnes than she instantly knew her to be the daughter of

Mr. Graham, and felt a sudden chill come over her, as she received from her hand the letter of her father. One more glance, however, on the pale features of her visitor, in whose countenance sweetness and benevolence were visible, and Mrs. Byron's manners, recovered their natural amenity. Taking the trembling hand of Agnes, she said, with a melancholy smile—"This visit, my dear madam, is a sufficient proof of the goodness of your heart. Your excellent father commends you to my regard. Alas! the deep affliction which I feel for my innocent, my amiable young friend, prevents my receiving you in the way I could wish, or you deserve."

Agnes pressed the hand of Mrs. Byron to her lips—"My dear father," she replied, "has taught me to venerate the exalted character of Mrs. Byron. I would fain solicit her friendship; yet how can the unfortunate destroyer of Mary's happiness ever presume to hope to be loved by her?"

Again she pressed the hand which she

held in her own to her lips, while Mrs. Byron, affected by her emotion, said—"It is impossible for me to withhold from you my esteem. The respect, the admiration which I feel for your father, independent of your own merits, would make me view you with the eyes of a friend; but the delicate wish you have expressed of seeing my beloved Mary—of soothing, if possible, the dreadful agitation of her spirits—of calming her fears respecting the object of all her sorrows, cannot but render you dear to me. The mind of Mary is truly honourable; it shrinks with horror from the supposition of meaning to injure the peace of a fellow-creature. Tremblingly alive to the censure of the world, and fully convinced of the justice of your claims, she nevertheless feels most acutely the severity of her fate, and in truth I am afraid will fall a victim to the heavy calamity which has thus unexpectedly bereaved her of all that was most dear to her. She is now in that lethargic state of mind and body that makes me alarmed for her

reason; nothing appears to have any power over her, since it was judged proper to remove her infant for a time from her presence."

"May I be permitted to see the baby?" said Mrs. Monteith in a faltering voice.

Mrs. Byron, unwilling to deny her request, immediately conducted her to the temporary nursery of the little Donald, whom they found but just awake, and not at all disposed to relish the food which Betty was endeavouring to entice him to swallow. Agnes caught him in her arms, and kissing him tenderly, could not refrain from expressing her admiration of his beauty—"Dear angel," said she, "how happy should I be were I but allowed to become a mother to thee! thine own could scarcely love thee better than I would.—Never, madam," she continued, addressing herself to Mrs. Byron, "have I beheld so lovely a child; he is the image of his father."

Again she redoubled her caresses; but

the baby, irritated by the loss of his favourite nourishment, cried to be returned to his nurse; and Agnes, mortified by his distress, unwillingly restored him to the arms of Betty, who soon succeeded in restoring him to his usual good temper; he would not, however, be persuaded to go back to Mrs. Monteith, although she tried to allure him by the glittering display of some trinkets. Finding that he was not to be seduced from Betty, she once more kissed his pouting lips, and descended with Mrs. Byron to the drawing-room.

"I will now," said the latter, "apprise Mary of your arrival; perhaps your presence may rouse her from the stupor into which she has fallen."

Agnes trembled violently; she longed, yet feared, to behold the idol of her husband's affections, the mother of the beautiful little Donald. The door opened, and Mary appeared, supported by her venerable friend. Pale, heart-broken, and almost insensible to the objects around her,

she still was lovely; and Agnes *felt* that her father was right when he affirmed that Mary Fitzroy was a dangerous rival.

"My beloved Mary," said Mrs. Byron, "this is the daughter of the good, the kind Mr. Graham, who, hearing of your illness, is come purposely to assure you of her friendly sentiments. Will you not speak to her, my child?"

Mary turned her eyes languidly towards her trembling visitor, then, as if suddenly recollecting herself, she said, with a shudder of agony, as she hid her face in the bosom of Mrs. Byron—"Ah, I comprehend! yet indeed, indeed I am not to blame. I thought him single—I believed him mine, and mine only."

Agnes pressed her hand with a warmth of feeling which was unusual to her placid nature—"My sister! my friend!" she exclaimed, "henceforward let me beseech of you to look on me as such, for never can I think of you in any other light than as the best and noblest of women."

Agnes now assisted Mrs. Byron in sup-

porting Mary to a sofa; she placed herself by her side, and still retained the soft white hand of the lovely mourner.

"This kindness, from one whom I have injured, though unintentionally," said Mary, "affords me all the consolation I can now receive. Oh, madam, had I but known of your existence—of your claim to the name of Monteith, I would have died before I would have infringed on your right! I hope, nay, I am sure that you will do credit to this assertion."

"Oh yes," cried Agnes, embracing her affectionately; "the sacrifice you have made is too great to leave a doubt of the innocency of your heart. Dearest Mary, how can I convince you of my love and gratitude?"

Miss Fitzroy turned her beautiful eyes on her inquiring friend, and with a look and voice which went to the soul of Agnes, replied—"If I have indeed deserved from you this flattering mark of your esteem, how pleasing will be the task which I would require of you to perform!

it is only to devote your whole attention to calm the sorrows of Monteith—to sooth the agitation of his mind—and to make him satisfied with himself, and resigned to his fate."

"Ah," cried Agnes, with quickness, "how willingly would I yield up my breath to ensure the repose of Donald! But my heart tells me that my tenderness, my watchful affection, my ceaseless attention to anticipate even his wishes, can never make amends for *your* loss. No, Mary, I feel that Monteith can never forget the happiness he has once enjoyed, and that I, alas! am incapable of supplying your place. Ah, had I but known the real state of his heart—had I but followed the dictates of my own reason, instead of the fond suggestions of his family, what misery should I not have been spared! what felicity would then have been your lot!"

The tears, the sobs of Agnes affected Mary, who, returning her embrace, said —"Do not despair; your virtues, and

the benevolence of Heaven, may bring about the attainment of your wishes."

"Never," replied the weeping wife of Monteith. "I have seen *you*, and all hope is gone. No, Mary, Donald can only think of me as the bane of his peace, the murderer of his happiness. Alas! he little knows how dearly I love him; and that nothing but strong necessity obliged me to accompany my father, for otherwise never would I have obtruded myself on his notice, or even reminded him of my unfortunate claim to his hand."

Mary gazed on her with increasing emotion, while Mrs. Byron vainly attempted to restrain her tears, wishing to express the admiration she felt for the amiable and neglected daughter of Mr. Graham. She watched, with anxiety, the changes of her young favourite's countenance, and was grieved to perceive that the sight of Mrs. Monteith had not made the desired impression, but that Mary was again sinking into her former torpor; she cast a look on Agnes, which the latter

immediately understood—"I have not yet dared," said she, "to shew myself to Donald; his sufferings are too great; my unwelcome presence might only increase them. My dear father sat up with him the whole of last night, but I fear that his disorder is highly dangerous, and may even baffle the skill of his physician."

Mary started convulsively; she grasped the hand of Agnes, and looking full in her face, exclaimed—"Did I hear right? Did you not say Monteith was ill?"

"Ill, very ill," replied Agnes; "he has been delirious ever since the receipt of your last letter."

"Merciful Heaven!" said Mary, bursting into a violent flood of tears, and falling back into the arms of Mrs. Byron, who rejoiced to see her weep, "Monteith is ill —his life is in danger—and it is *I* who have destroyed him!"

Agnes would have attempted to console her, but Mrs. Byron motioned to her not to disturb her. Mrs. Monteith could not,

however, refrain from occasionally pressing the hand she held, while her own tears fell rapidly, as she thought of her sick husband, and of the amiable victim of his tenderness.

Mary at length raised her head from the bosom of her maternal friend, and clasping her hands wildly together—"Pardon, oh God," she cried, "pardon the weakness of thine erring creature! Fain would I bend submissively to thy decrees—fain would I endeavour to forget what I once was—what I now am! If I fail in the attempt, pardon, oh God! my want of fortitude." Then turning towards Agnes, she said—"And *you* must forgive me also. I have done my utmost to act as duty and honour dictates—I have strove to banish from my mind the remembrance of all my past happiness—the remembrance of him who alone could bestow it; I feel that to love him *now* would be criminal, since he is no longer mine; but I cannot hear of his illness, and know myself the cause, without suffering the severest anguish."

Agnes embraced her; they wept together—"My friend, my sister," she exclaimed, "do not ask *my* pardon! Alas! it is *I* that am the unhappy source of all *your* miseries—*I* am the wretched bar to *your* felicity! Dearest Mary, did you not still feel the tenderest interest for him who is the father of your child, you would be undeserving of such a heart as Donald's."

Mary returned her affectionate caresses with lively gratitude—"Dear Agnes," she murmured faintly, "your generosity and patient forbearance merit the affection of Monteith, and call forth esteem and confidence. Since it has pleased Heaven to deprive me of him I so fondly idolized, I rejoice to find that the mistaken kindness of his family has not bound him to an object unworthy of him, and incapable of awakening his regard. Oh, my friend (for well do you deserve that dear, that sacred name), you know not the excess, the fervour of that attachment which we cherished for each other. Alas! I will not de-

ceive you; I feel that while I exist, Monteith will ever be dear to me. Yet fear not, Agnes, the effect of this confession; the worst is past—I have solemnly resigned him—I have had courage to combat against his pleadings, against my own tenderness; fear not, therefore, Agnes, that I shall ever disgrace your kindness, or the generous and paternal protection of your noble father. Never will I voluntarily commit any action that can lessen the good opinion you have so disinterestedly formed of my principles—never will I hold any communication with Monteith, unknown to you and Mr. Graham."

"I believe you, Mary—I trust to you fearlessly, and, in return, I promise to acquaint you with all that concerns the beloved object of our solicitude. I will write to you, under cover to Mrs. Byron, who will have the goodness to enclose your answers to my father."

Mary expressed her thanks, and Mrs. Byron, who had sat a silent spectator until now, took the passive hand of her favourite,

and placing it in that of Agnes, said—"Old as I am, and much as I have seen of the world, I have never before witnessed two young women who have more deserved its admiration than yourselves. Continue to cherish for each other these friendly sentiments, which do honour to your hearts and to your understandings. Should the state of my dear Mary's health and spirits make writing painful to her, you will not, I hope, object to the correspondence of an old woman, who esteems your virtues, and who loves you for your own and your father's merits."

Agnes raised the hand of Mrs. Byron to her lips, saying—"To have gained your friendship, and that of the amiable Mary, will ever be my proudest boast; to preserve it shall be my study. I know how highly you must be interested in the present state of our dear Monteith's health; you shall hear, either from me or my father, daily; and should it be necessary to allow him the privilege of seeing his child, I hope, Mary, that you will not refuse to

entrust him to my care; I pledge myself to bring him back to your arms at the time you wish."

"If such is the request of his father," replied Mary, trembling with fresh emotions, "I will not raise any objection to a wish of his. To *you* I will confide my only treasure—from you I shall receive him. Can I repose in you a greater trust?"

Agnes replied, that she would not rob her for an hour of her infant's company, unless circumstances should render such a trial necessary. Again she pledged herself for his safe return; and after embracing Mary, and assuring her of her implicit faith in her honour, she left her, to return to the hotel which contained the husband of her choice, and the kind father and friend of all who were desolate and oppressed.

At the door of the hotel stood the carriage of the physician who attended Monteith, and Agnes hurried to her apartment with a palpitating heart, anxious to hear his opinion of one so dear to her. He

came accompanied by her father. Monteith was still delirious; but he gave hopes that the goodness of his constitution might overcome the violence of the disorder.

At his departure, Mr. Graham inquired what was the opinion of his daughter respecting Miss Fitzroy?

"Alas, my father!" she replied, "I can entertain no hope of supplanting her in the affections of my husband. Although seen to every disadvantage, she charmed me by her beauty, and the unaffected elegance of her manners. I wonder not at her being beloved by Monteith; but I should wonder much if it were possible he could ever forget her."

"To be candid with you, my Agnes, I do not believe that Donald will be able to banish from his mind the remembrance of one so devotedly attached to him—of one to whom he clings with a passion ardent, and almost bordering on idolatry. I feel for *him*, for *Mary*, and for *you*, my poor neglected child. But weep not, Agnes; if the heart of Monteith is irrecoverably

lost, you have the chance of endearing yourself to him by your kindness to poor Mary, and your watchful attention to himself. Patience and perseverance, my dear child, may do much for you; he cannot be insensible to the generous forbearance you have shewn him—he will not be ungrateful for it; and though his affections may be fixed on the mother of his son, he will not fail to esteem the virtues and tender constancy of his wife."

Agnes dried her tears—"My father, may I not see him?—may I not assist in administering to his wants? I shall feel a melancholy pleasure in attending him, though he will be insensible to my care."

"Surely, my child, you may," replied Mr. Graham. "To your prudence I entrust him, while I take a short repose on the sofa; I am fatigued, and want rest; go, therefore, my dear Agnes; you will find the faithful servant of Monteith, who has never quitted him, and a respectable elderly woman, whom the mistress of the hotel recommended as a nurse."

Agnes embraced her father, whom she loved with filial veneration; and after having persuaded him to lie down on her bed, and placed the pillows for his head, she stole gently to the chamber of her husband. Trembling and faint, she opened the door; the thought of beholding him to whom she had been induced to unite herself for ever—him whom she had loved from childhood, and who she had been taught to believe loved her in return—him who, disregardless of the solemn ties which bound them together, had abandoned her, and devoted himself to another, refusing even to acknowledge the legality of their marriage—the thought of seeing *him*, of witnessing his incoherent ravings, of hearing him pour forth his soul in tender upbraidings to her rival, or draw down imprecations on her own guiltless head, overcame the gentle spirit of Agnes. With difficulty she tottered to a seat next his bedside, when she would have fallen to the ground, but for the

timely assistance of the nurse, who received her fainting form in her arms, and who learning from Malcolm, who was present, the name of her visitor, easily comprehended the cause of her illness.

Agnes, on recovering, found herself alone with Mrs. Ballantine; the servants had retired within call, and Monteith had fallen into a deep but uneasy slumber. Agnes held aside the curtain which concealed the beloved form of her suffering husband; his handsome features were crimsoned with the deep scarlet of his disorder, and his clenched hands were firmly entwined in the coverlit of the bed.

Agnes bent over him in breathless solicitude; her tears fell on his burning cheek; her sobs awakened the compassion of Mrs. Ballantine, who respectfully taking her hand, besought her to be comforted, as the youth of Monteith, and the goodness of his constitution, were greatly in his favour—"Were it possible," said she, "to divert his mind from one subject, I should not fear his recovery; but all his ravings

are about one person, who appears to have been the cause of his illness."

Agnes sighed deeply, and Monteith awoke, screaming violently that Mary had stabbed him, that he felt the steel through his breast; then catching hold of the hand of Agnes, he started up in bed, and gazing wildly in her face, demanded who she was, and what she wanted there? Seeing her weep, he said—"Poor girl, poor girl, don't cry! Have you lost your lover? Has he run away from you? Has he cruelly abandoned you, after swearing eternal fidelity—after promising to live for you, and you only? Do not cry; he will come back; but my Mary is gone, gone for ever!" He then raved with such incoherence and violence, that the nurse was obliged to call for Alex and Malcolm to assist her in detaining him in bed.

When the fury of the paroxysm was past, he sunk on his pillow exhausted, and Agnes again drew nigh to his bedside, and pressed his feverish hand to her lips. Monteith looked at her for a moment; and though unconscious who she was, he

seemed sensible of her distress, and pleased by her attentions. He took from her his medicine more readily than from the nurse; and Agnes therefore determined to remain with him as long as her presence would afford him any consolation. To this her father did not object; and she therefore ordered a sofa to be placed in his chamber, upon which she could occasionally repose herself during the slumbers of her husband.

Although she entirely devoted herself to the comforts of Monteith, yet Agnes nevertheless remembered the anxiety which must be felt by Mary and her maternal friend, should she fail in the promise she had given them; she accordingly made a point of writing to Mrs. Byron once or twice a-day—an attention which sunk deep into the hearts of both Mary and her friend —a kindness which neither of them ever failed to acknowledge with the warmest gratitude, whenever the name of Agnes passed their lips.

Monteith, though he continued to la-

bour under repeated fits of delirium, yet began to have his quiet intervals. At these moments he wept like a child, or remained lost in the deepest state of melancholy, refusing all kind of sustenance, unless when offered him by Agnes, who still continued to attend him with unceasing care both night and day. Fearful of being known to him on his first return to reason, she partly made a confidant of Mrs. Ballantine, to whom she communicated her fears, and to whom she applied for advice. With her assistance, she completely altered the cast of her features; instead of her own black hair, she wore a flaxen wig, and on her cheeks a quantity of rouge, which gave a brilliancy to her dark eyes which they had never before expressed. Nothing could be more unlike herself than what she now was, and Mr. Graham, when he first saw her, could hardly credit that the being before him was the pale and delicate Agnes, whose black hair used to fall in jetty ringlets over her face and bosom, as if to make the contrast more striking be-

tween their dark locks and her transparent white skin. The flaxen curls, and the vivid colour of her cheeks, would have deceived even him, had he not been forewarned of the alteration he was to expect. Malcolm, however, was not permitted to be in the secret; he therefore inquired of his master who was the strange lady with Mrs. Ballantine, and could scarcely believe that it was his young mistress, until assured of it by herself.

Thus encouraged, Agnes at length brought herself to sit fearlessly by the side of Monteith; it was, however, with difficulty that she kept from fainting when he first shewed symptoms of returning sense. He had before asked who she was; but it was in a careless manner, and evidently indifferent as to the reply; he now inquired of Mrs. Ballantine with a degree of anxiety, and seemed pleased to learn that she was a niece of hers, whom Mr. Graham had given permission to attend him, as long as her assistance might be serviceable to her aunt, and agreeable to him.

Monteith then asked for her, and upon Agnes hastening towards him, he thanked her, in a low voice, for her kind attentions, and besought her not to leave him. Upon her promising to remain, he seemed satisfied, sighed deeply, and sunk into a kind of stupor, to which, however, he became daily less and less subject, as the tender attentions of Agnes grew more necessary to his tranquillity. Once or twice he expressed his surprise at the difference between her and her supposed aunt; but this Agnes tried to account for, by saying that her father was an officer in the army, and that she had been brought up entirely by his relations, who had given her an education far above her condition in life; and that having unfortunately married without their consent, they had withdrawn their protection from her, and she had therefore come to London to reside with her mother's sister, who had behaved to her with great kindness.

"You are then married," said Monteith, raising himself a little in his bed, while

Agnes bent over him to support his head on her bosom. "Then you must have loved—perhaps with energy. Yet where is your husband? Why are you not with him, my kind and tender nurse?"

"Circumstances obliged him to quit me the day after our union," said Agnes tremblingly.

"Poor girl!" replied Monteith; "then you have only been mocked with the name of wife. Did you not feel this cruel separation severely?"

"Most severely!" repeated Agnes. "I loved him truly—fondly loved him. I have never ceased to lament the unhappy cause that divided us, perhaps for ever."

Monteith felt her trembling increase; he took her hand, and pressed it to his lips. Agnes, affected at this action, burst into tears, while Monteith, alarmed, raised himself from her shoulder, and looking earnestly in her face, said—"Forgive me, amiable Annie; I have touched upon a string which awakens some secret sorrow. Alas! who can so well sympathize in your distress

as one who, heart-broken by the loss of all that was dear to him, only looks forward to the grave as a release for his endless mortifications?" He sunk back into her arms, and Mrs. Ballantine deemed it prudent to come forward to the relief of both.

When Monteith was a little recovered, she apologized for the agitation of her niece, attributing it to the likeness which existed between himself and the young man to whom she was united, and from whom she had been so unexpectedly separated the day after her marriage.

"By what cause?" said Monteith, in a low voice.

"I know not," replied Mrs. Ballantine; "but I believe that she has neither seen nor heard of him since his strange departure. She is a good and worthy young woman; and I hope, sir, that you will pardon any little freedom in her conduct, which may arise from your resemblance to the husband she still continues to love dearly."

Monteith seemed thoughtful for the remainder of the day; his voice, how-

ever, softened into a musical sweetness whenever he addressed Agnes; but a visit from Mr. Graham awakened all his agonies, and brought on a temporary fit of insanity, occasioned by his anxiety to know the fate of Mary, whom he now persisted in calling his beloved destroyer, his adored murderess. Her miniature had been taken from him during his alarming delirium—he now demanded it of Mr. Graham. Out of kindness to his son, the worthy man advised him not to continue to carry about him an object which could not fail of nourishing his despair, and feeding his disorder. He gently reminded him of the request of the lovely original; but Monteith grew frantic, and Mr. Graham, at the earnest entreaty of Agnes, returned to him the beautiful likeness of the unhappy Mary.

No sooner did the eyes of Monteith catch a glimpse of her adored features—no sooner did he press it to his heart, than he became calm, and poor Agnes, to whom he was indebted for its restoration, was deputed by him to fasten the resemblance

of her rival round the neck of her agitated husband. In the warmth of the moment he kissed her hand passionately, as he exclaimed—"You have restored to me the most sacred treasure I possess! While I live I will not forget this kindness!"

CHAPTER VI.

As the physician and the nurse had predicted, the youth and excellent constitution of Monteith overcame the violence of his disease. He was no longer subject to those alarming fits of raving which terrified his attendants; but he had now to combat against a settled melancholy, nearly as alarming as his delirium. He was, however, sensible of the kind attentions of those about his person, and frequently expressed to them his gratitude: yet he spoke little; the chief of his conversation was addressed to Agnes, whom he repeatedly requested not to leave him during the stay of her

aunt. To this she joyfully consented, pleased to find that her presence was agreeable to him, though pained whenever she reflected that she was indebted to the change in her appearance for this gratification.

Monteith was so completely reduced as to be unable for some time to walk across the room without assistance; and Mr. Graham, who viewed with parental anxiety his increasing regard for his tender nurse, saw with delight that he always preferred the support of her arm to that of any other. As Monteith's strength gradually recovered, so as to enable him to bear the fatigue of travelling, he thought fit to remind him that his physician deemed a change of air, and a milder climate, absolutely necessary to the re-establishment of his health.

Donald listened to him with respectful silence; but by his countenance Mr. Graham saw that he was averse to a removal. He had never, since his return to reason, mentioned the name of Mary; but

his father could only attribute his repugnance to leave London to a desire of continuing, perhaps, until he was able to write to her once more on the subject of their separation.

"Tell me, my son," said he, in a voice of affectionate encouragement, "what induces you to wish to remain here, against the advice of doctor Malvern? is there any arrangement you feel inclined to make, and can I not forward your wishes? you ought to know enough of me, not to hesitate at disclosing them, whatever they may be."

"I have no wish to prolong a miserable existence," replied Monteith, faintly; "and am so well satisfied with my present attendants, that I should regret leaving town, which might subject me to new ones."

Mr. Graham could hardly conceal his delight at hearing this from Monteith—"Then you would consent to accompany me to Clifton, could Mrs. Ballantine make it convenient to go with us?"

A faint colour for a moment tinged the pale cheek of Monteith—"I should prefer," said he, "the society of her niece. Could I but persuade Mrs. Letsom to continue her kind attendance on me, I think I might be induced to take the journey."

"You seem to have attached yourself, my son, to Mrs. Letsom; nor do I wonder at it, since she is a young woman much above the common, and appears to possess a mind equally as agreeable as her manners. I think she has greatly contributed to your recovery. During your long estrangement from reason, she watched over you with unwearied assiduity, and nursed you with all the tenderness of a sister; in short, I think she is a very interesting woman."

"I am indebted to her for so many little acts of kindness," replied Monteith, "that I shall consider the loss of her society as a serious deprivation, and could almost wish to continue an invalid, that I might retain her about my person. I am sometimes puzzled at the vast difference which there

is between her and Mrs. Ballantine; and though she has herself accounted for it, yet I think the conduct of the aunt is by far too respectful, and too distant, for so near a relation: and yet, again, what interest can she have to appear what she is not? no; it must be as she says; she must have derived her gentility from her father, and her education and manners from his family, not that of her mother."

"It is rather an awkward proposal to make," said Mr. Graham, "to so young a woman; but, perhaps, my dear son, it may come best from yourself. I would have you make it to-day, when Mrs. Letsom returns. The winter threatens to be a severe one, and I am anxious to have you try the benefit of a warmer air as early as possible. But, my dear Donald, I think you do not deal candidly with me, on a subject which, of course, must occupy the chief of your thoughts. You cannot fail to understand my meaning."

Monteith seemed to be greatly agitated; at length he said—"My dear sir, I know

that you are all goodness, that you are the most considerate, the most amiable of men. I doubt not your willingness to listen, or to comply with a wish of mine; but I doubt my own strength, my own fortitude, to make it." The tears started into his eyes. "After the letter which I received on the night of my illness, I will not again attempt to compose another, or seek to seduce your *adopted daughter* from her ideas of moral rectitude. She has chosen to abandon me to wretchedness, from notions which may do honour to her principles, but not to her heart. May she be happy in her choice! may she be a stranger to the torments which her desertion has caused me! and may the consciousness of having acted *virtuously* make amends for the loss of him who lives but to adore her!"

He paused to take breath, and to wipe off the tears of disappointed love, which moistened his face.

"My friend, my best friend," he continued, "you have promised to be a father to her—I know how sacredly you will

hold that promise; I therefore confide her to your parental care and protection, until the time arrives when I shall be able to settle upon her and my boy a suitable provision. Tell her, however, from me, that though I cannot refuse to grant a request of hers, except in one instance, yet I must occasionally see my child during my residence in England; for I cannot agree to his being brought up in ignorance of a father who may love him too much, but who can never think of him with indifference. Neither, my dear sir, can I return to her the miniature, which was taken in my hours of rapture, when I thought that were all the world to forsake me, *she* would still remain to charm me into a love of life: days of bliss, and of mistaken confidence! alas! all that is now left to remind me that ye once existed, is the image of her who was the idol of my soul. Tell her then, my dear sir, that never, while I have power to breathe, will I resign my treasure. As I gaze on the faultless fea-

tures, they will call to my recollection the inconstancy of woman's love—the lightness of woman's vows."

"I am too much the friend of woman," replied Mr. Graham, "to coincide with you in any opinion that can lessen their value. I have always believed, that, generally speaking, *their* errors proceed from *our* crimes. Woman is the soul which animates the body of man. What should we be, deprived of their society, their caresses, and their gentle and endearing attentions?

'Ask the poor pilgrim, on this convex cast,
His grizzled locks distorted in the blast—
Ask him what accents sooth, what hand bestows
The cordial beverage, garment, and repose—
Oh, he will dart a spark of ancient flame,
And clasp his trem'lous hands, and *woman* name!
Peruse the sacred volume—Him who died,
Her kiss betray'd not, nor her tongue denied;
While e'en the apostle left him to his doom,
She linger'd round his cross, and watch'd his tomb.'

Besides, my dear Monteith, have you not

acknowledged that the kindness of Mrs. Letsom has frequently softened the poignancy of your feelings, and that your recovery is in a great measure owing to her watchful care of you?"

"I am ready to repeat the same," said Monteith; "neither am I one of those who love to revile the sex. I have, however, been deceived, cruelly deceived, in a being whom I thought as perfect as human nature can be, and I may therefore be permitted to doubt the steadiness of their attachments."

"Perhaps, my dear son, were you to reflect seriously on the matter, you would find that, even in this instance, my opinion is a just one; though I cannot agree with you that you have been deceived in that person. You thought her nearly perfect—she has not disgraced the character you had formed of her. Her virtues have been put to the severest trial, and she has acquitted herself nobly. Let your mind remain perfectly at ease, my dear Donald,

with respect to being comfortably situated; I have adopted her for my own, and I flatter myself that I possess her confidence and esteem."

Agnes, who had been to call on Mary, now returned from her walk in time to administer to her patient his morning's medicine, and Mr. Graham retired, having first given his daughter a look, which, as they had before conversed on the subject, she well understood.

Monteith took the glass from her hands, and sighing deeply, said—"Of what avail is the skill of the physician, since he cannot administer to a mind diseased, nor still the throbbings of a broken heart? dear Mrs. Letsom, how much am I indebted to you for your tender care and attention to me during the worst part of my illness! if I should lose you now, my recovery will be still doubtful."

"I hope not," replied Agnes, trembling; "I hope not. You mean then, I suppose, sir, to go soon to Clifton."

"Such is the wish of Mr. Graham," said

Monteith; "but unless you can make it convenient to accompany me, and share with your aunt the fatigue of attending a miserable and desponding invalid, I shall prefer remaining where I may yet have a chance of enjoying your society."

"You flatter me, sir, by such a wish," replied Agnes, still trembling with new-born hopes; "I should indeed be happy to continue my humble endeavours towards affording you any gratification; but it will not be in my power to remain with you after this week."

Monteith testified his vexation at this disagreeable intelligence—"Alas!" said he, "where shall I find a companion so intelligent, so kind as yourself—one to whom I could pour forth all my sorrows, sure of meeting with the most consoling sympathy? how unfortunate that I should be obliged to relinquish the acquaintance of a person who I feel disposed to look on as a friend!"

Agnes, hurried away by her feelings, hastily caught his hand, and pressed it to

her lips; then recollecting herself, she said —"Forgive me, sir, I beseech you, this liberty; but you looked and spoke so like the husband I love dearly, that I almost thought it was him before me."

"Then you still love him, Annie, though he has, you say, scarcely taken any notice of you for so long a time?"

"How dearly I love him, Heaven and my own heart can best tell. I should think myself the happiest creature in the world were I but permitted to be his menial servant. Oh, how gladly would I follow him the world over, and only study how best I could evince my duty and affection!"

Agnes said this in a voice so tender, and her eyes expressed so much sweetness and feeling, that Monteith felt himself strangely affected. He took her hand, while the tears filled his fine eyes, now robbed of their fire and brilliancy by illness—"Amiable Annie, it is a heart such as thine that can best enter into my deep distress. See," said he, drawing from his bosom the mi-

niature of Mary, " the resemblance of one for whom alone I wish to live. Look at these enchanting features, this lovely form —once mine, now lost to me for ever!"

Overcome by the excess of his passion and of his distress, he sunk on the shoulder of Agnes, who involuntarily pressed him gently to her bosom, as her arms supported the emaciated body of the handsomest man of the age.

Monteith again kissed her hand—" You pity me, Annie; you have witnessed my agonies, and you can judge of the fervor of my love by the severity of my sufferings. Yet listen to my sad story; you deserve to know my error, since you are acquainted with its punishment."

He now repeated to her the whole origin of his misfortunes, pausing every now and then to recover his firmness, and to wipe away the fast-falling tears of his attentive listener. After he had concluded, he said —" Would you, Annie, have acted as Mary has done? would you have consigned to eternal misery, eternal regrets, the

man whom you professed to idolize—the man to whom your infant owed its existence? ah, no! your gentle nature would have sacrificed all to love—you would have braved the censure of the world, to secure to yourself the heart that adored you."

"Oh, sir!" said Agnes, with streaming eyes, "I know not whether I should have had sufficient virtue, sufficient fortitude, to resign to another the man whom I had been authorized to love as a husband; but I know that the woman who could do this, and yet love as tenderly as this lady, deserves to be immortalized. But what, sir, must be the feelings of your unfortunate wife? oh! at this moment, perhaps, her heart is bursting, yet she dares not tell you how devotedly it is all your own."

"No, Annie, her disposition is too inanimate to be disturbed by the neglect of a man who never professed to regard her in any other light than as the friend of his sisters. Had she but possessed your feeling mind, your tender and sympathizing

heart, I might perhaps have been spared the tortures I now feel—I might never have seen the angel form of Mary; and though no other woman would have had the same power to enchant my senses, I might have been comparatively happy."

"Pardon me, sir, but perhaps you may be deceived in the character of your wife; you may only have seen her in her days of tranquil happiness, when every thing around contributed to the placidity of her nature: Adversity makes strange changes; and were you to see her now, you might find that it had altered *her*."

"Probably it may, but the change would come too late; all that I have now to bestow is esteem—a cold sentiment, Annie, for a wife."

"Time might ripen it into a warmer feeling," replied Agnes, "had she but the same opportunity as I have of shewing to you her devotion."

"Name her no more, Annie; it is a subject most unpleasing to me, although in you she has a persuasive advocate."

"Poor lady!" sighed Agnes; "how hard her fate, how much is she an object of pity, since her very name is displeasing to the ears of her husband!"

"You speak feelingly, Annie; yet surely *you* can never anticipate the dread of being placed in a similar situation. Whatever may detain your husband for so long a time from your arms, he can never fail to remember you with affectionate interest. You are not a woman, I am convinced, to be tamely loved."

Agnes could not restrain her tears—"You think of me too favourably, sir, because I have been so fortunate as to render you some trifling services; but you may not always have the same opinion. I am a stranger to you—I may be far different to what I now seem to be. It is not impossible but that, at a future time, were you to know more of me, I might become an object of your aversion."

"Impossible, my dear, my tender Annie; I am not so ungrateful. I can never forget the delicate attentions I have re-

ceived from you—the many nights of watchful care that you have passed in my chamber. I can never forget that you performed the humane office of a nurse to a stranger, abandoned by her he adored, and for whom alone that stranger wished to live. No, Annie, our acquaintance must not end here. I must know your place of residence. I cannot, nor will not, consent to give up the friendship of one to whom I shall ever consider myself as eternally obliged."

To be thus held in estimation by Monteith was highly flattering to the affectionate Agnes; but she nevertheless trembled to discover herself, lest the rooted dislike which he appeared to have even to her name, should overbalance the esteem he entertained for the supposed Annie Letsom. Her father, however, consoled her by his assurances that every thing was going on well, and that he was almost certain of the success of her innocent deception.

"Do not be disappointed, my Agnes,"

said he, "should he not receive you at first as you expect. We must give him time to fall into our wishes. He has undergone a severe trial, and has suffered most acutely for his fault. It must be our business to alleviate as much as possible the keenness of his sorrows, and to make him forget the happiness which is lost to him."

"All that I ask," replied Agnes, "is to be permitted to continue his attendant."

As the time approached which was to deprive Monteith of the society of his kind young nurse, his spirits entirely forsook him, and he even declined the little delicacies which she took care to provide for him, and of which she vainly endeavoured to persuade him to partake. When she read to him out of his favourite authors—when she dwelt on the passages which she had selected as most beautiful, he appeared absent and inattentive, and the tears of vexation were visible whenever she caught a glimpse of his melancholy countenance.

The tenderness of Agnes was not proof against his despondency, and she longed, yet dreaded, to discover herself, to know at once all that she had to hope or to fear. She had quitted him one morning, leaving him to the care of her father and Mrs. Ballantine, strictly enjoining them to do their utmost to amuse his mind during her absence. Her stay was short, and her return brought the glow of pleasure on the pale cheek of the invalid, who was listening with respectful attention to the arrangements made by Mr. Graham for their removal from London.

"Ah!" cried Monteith, pressing her hand, "how good of you, Annie, to come back so soon!"

"I have brought with me," said she, "my little godson; but I would not introduce him, sir, without your permission. He is but a baby, and perhaps you would think him troublesome."

"Send for him immediately," replied Monteith. "I am fond of children; and

if he is good tempered, he will help to amuse me."

Agnes flew into the next apartment, and quickly returned, bringing in her arms a most lovely child, whom she presented, with a beating heart, to her patient.

Monteith gave a sudden start, as if he had been electrified—"I cannot be deceived," said he, pressing the infant passionately to his bosom, "he is mine—it is my boy! oh, my own darling, and do I again behold thee! where, oh, where is thy cruel, thy adored mother?"

The child, terrified by the warmth of his caresses, stretched forth his little hands towards Agnes, with whom he was become perfectly acquainted, and uttering a cry of discontent, hid his crimson cheek in her bosom; till soothed into confidence, he ventured first to peep at his father, then gaining more courage, he suffered himself to be placed once again in his arms.

The surprise, the mingled pain and rapture felt by Monteith, almost overcame

his enfeebled frame; tears fell on the face of his child, who now quietly received the fond embraces of his doting parent—"My best friend," said the agitated father, addressing himself to Mr. Graham, who was much affected by the sight before him, "it is to you I am indebted for this unlooked-for happiness. Oh, you have ever been the most indulgent of fathers, the most considerate of friends; and I should be the most ungrateful of men were I ever to forget it!"

The sobs of Agnes made Monteith turn round quickly. He pressed her hand to his lips—"Excellent Annie!" he exclaimed, "you also have a strong claim on my gratitude. But how is it that this dear angel extends his hands, and seems anxious to go to you, as if he had seen you before? My boy, my darling, I cannot confide you to a worthier object than the tender nurse, the disinterested and affectionate friend of thy miserable father."

He pressed the child to his bosom, then placed him in the arms of Agnes, who

embracing him fondly, suffered him to take her handkerchief, and wipe away the tears which trickled down her cheeks—an office which he had often performed for his afflicted mother. By degrees Monteith grew more composed; he gazed with rapture on the already-beautiful features of his son, as he saw him try to climb the knees of Mr. Graham, and twine his dimpled fingers in the silver locks of his venerable friend, or press his rosy lips to those of Agnes, pat her face, or play at peep-bo on her shoulder. Yet Monteith felt his rapture mingled with agony—he could not behold the first pledge of his fondest affections innocently sporting before him, without remembering the lovely mother who gave him being—that mother on whom he continued to dote with undiminished tenderness, notwithstanding that his pride and his love were deeply wounded by her refusing to return to him.

The sweet infant soon grew familiar with his sick parent; he sat on his knee, and suffered himself to be fed by him.

laughing all the while, unconscious of the beloved relation who held him, and whose heart, could it have been seen into, was a sad contrast to the smiling happy countenance of his son.

Agnes now prepared to conduct her young charge back to his expecting mother. She rose, and looked at the repeater of her husband: he felt that it was the signal of departure. The boy was closely strained to his breast; vainly he tried to hide his emotions—he became almost convulsed; but the assurance of Mr. Graham that, if he pleased, he should see him again to-morrow, silenced his agonies, and in a great measure tranquillized his spirits. Again and again he kissed the blooming infant, then suddenly restoring him to Agnes, who stood near him, he said—"Take him, Annie, while I have courage to part with him. Take him; perhaps his mother is at this moment mourning his absence." He then covered his face, and flung himself back on the sofa, while Agnes hastily

departed with the child, anxious to return him at the appointed hour.

Monteith waited impatiently for the sound of the carriage-wheels which was to bring back the amiable impostor. At length she arrived—she entered his apartment, and he hastened, weak as he was, to receive her. Catching hold of both her hands, he placed her by his side on the sofa. They were alone, and he gave way to the impulse of the moment, to inquire if she had seen his Mary, the mother of his boy?

Agnes confessed that she had.

"My God! you have then beheld the idol of my affections—you have seen the woman I adore! you have the power to discover to me her retreat—but I do not ask it, Annie; I have passed my word to that best of men, and I will sacredly keep it. Yet tell me, Annie, is she not beautiful, is she not worthy to be adored? Tell me, Annie, did she once inquire after the wretch whom she has abandoned?"

"She is indeed beautiful," replied Agnes, much agitated, "though sickness and sorrow have robbed her cheek of its roses, and stolen away the lustre of her blue eyes."

Monteith started from the couch—"Is she ill? is she unhappy? let me fly to her relief! Alas! alas!" sinking back on the sofa, and bursting into a violent flood of tears, "I forgot I no longer possess the power to charm away the pains of disease —I forgot that Mary had broken her vow, and that she no longer loves me."

Agnes supported him in her arms; her tears mingled with his, as in a faltering voice she generously vindicated the noble heroism of the absent Mary.

"I should not have expected this," said Monteith, "from a woman of your tenderness, Annie. How can you vindicate a want of fidelity in your sex, when you would condemn it in mine?"

"I do not admit," replied Agnes, "that this amiable creature has violated her fidelity to you. The vow which you say she

has broken was made when she believed herself your wife. Had she kept it after discovering that you were the husband of another, her fidelity would have been criminal; and even you, at a future period, would have ceased to venerate the woman who would voluntarily sully the purity of her character to gratify a selfish passion. Miss Fitzroy was never more deserving of your admiration, than when she sacrificed her dearest affections to the voice of justice, and the calls of honour and of virtue."

Monteith looked at her with an inquiring eye, as he said—"You have excited my curiosity, Annie, and have given birth to new emotions in my soul. Tell me, I conjure you, how long have you known Miss Fitzroy? surely you must have seen her before to-day?"

"I have," replied Agnes, "and am honoured by her confidence. I respect and love her as my sister; and I look upon her as the most exalted, the most noble of women."

Monteith, more and more amazed, con-

tinued to gaze steadfastly in the changeful countenance of Agnes, whose hand he still held. At length, after the pause of a moment, during which time his companion trembled with apprehension, he exclaimed—"Annie, you are not the niece of Mrs. Ballantine! I always doubted it —*now* I am convinced. Nay, turn not from me, Annie; my gratitude is still the same—it has even increased, since you are the friend of Mary. But who are you? and for what purpose did you take upon yourself the tedious and fatiguing office of attending the sick chamber of a stranger?"

Agnes now trembled more violently; she turned sick, and had scarce courage to reply—"You are no stranger to me, Monteith; but I dare not tell my name, lest the kindness you have expressed for Annie Letsom should change to hatred, when you discovered—"

"What?" hastily demanded Monteith, gasping for breath.

"That she is Agnes Graham!"

Monteith started from his seat, and went to the furthest end of the room; when flinging himself on a chair, he said, in a hurried voice—"Again deceived! again betrayed!" then covering his face, became considerably agitated.

Agnes threw herself on one knee before him, and taking his hand, pressed it to her lips—"Pardon," she cried, "dearest Monteith, this innocent deception! never should I have dared to obtrude myself on your notice, had it not been proposed to me to disguise myself, that I might attend you during your painful illness. You condescended to be pleased by my attentions, and I wanted courage to withdraw myself from your presence. Oh, Donald! you have not been again betrayed; all that I ask, thus humbly on my knees, is, to be permitted to continue with you as Annie Letsom—to watch over you—to anticipate your wants—and to afford you all the consolation in my power under your severe affliction."

Monteith felt his resentment subside;

his heart gradually softened towards her. He uncovered his eyes. Agnes continued kneeling before him; on the ground lay her flaxen curls, while her own jetty ringlets fell over her face and shoulders. Her humble attitude, her imploring manner, her interesting countenance, full of tenderness and anxiety, joined to the remembrance of her delicate, unobtrusive, and silent attachment, rendered her doubly amiable, even in the prejudiced eyes of her husband—"Rise, Agnes," said he, in a faltering voice; "I am not worthy of this generous self-denial. Rise, and be Annie still. Continue to be my friendly nurse. Let me call you by the name which first awakened my gratitude and esteem. All that a broken heart can bestow is yours."

Agnes uttered a faint cry of joy, and sunk senseless at his feet. She however soon recovered, and kissing rapturously the hand of Monteith, said, smilingly, through her tears—"This moment, Donald, of unlooked-for happiness, repays

me for my years of secret misery. Call me Annie, call me any thing, only retain for me the friendship which you shewed to me under that name."

The entrance of Mr. Graham brought the blush of shame on the cheek of Monteith; but Agnes, who had flung herself on the bosom of her father, and who had told him, in broken accents, of the accomplishment of her wishes, now led him to her husband with grateful exultation.

The worthy man embraced him tenderly—"My son, my dear son," he cried, "blush not to have yielded to the impulse of gratitude and generosity. The more you know of the amiable qualities of a heart whose animated tenderness you were unacquainted with until lately, the more worthy you will find it of your regard. The esteem you felt for my daughter, as Annie Letsom, will increase. She will continue to be the sister and friend of *her* whose noble soul will rejoice with me in our present happiness, and who has, as well as yourself, derived comfort and con-

solation in her affectionate society. Yes, Monteith, my child is the acknowledged friend of Mary. It was with *her* she passed those hours which she stole from her attendance on you. Your son can scarcely be dearer to his mother than he is to Agnes. To-morrow you shall again embrace him. Your happiness shall be our sole study."

Monteith, much affected, pressed alternately to his bosom the hands of Agnes and her father—"I will try," said he, "to make some amends for your mutual kindness towards a being every way deserving of your unwearied tenderness. As a proof of my sincerity, I am ready to leave town as early as you please."

Mr. Graham could not restrain his satisfaction at this willingness of his son to oblige him, while Agnes hung over the chair of her husband with her eyes raised towards heaven in silent gratitude. The chief wish of her heart was now accomplished. She was allowed to breathe the

same air with him, to watch over him, and to shew, by a hundred little nameless attentions, her devotion, her love, and her duty.

CHAPTER VII.

THE fortunate termination of Mrs. Monteith's innocent deception was no sooner made known to Mary, than flinging her arms round the neck of Agnes, she sincerely prayed that her happiness might be permanent.

"Generous Mary!" exclaimed Agnes, returning her embrace, "and may the consciousness of having acted with more than human goodness chase away from your mind every unpleasant, every painful reflection! I shall be separated from you for a time; but you will live in my heart. Every hour of my life will bring with it the sweet remembrance of your

virtues—every comfort I enjoy will remind me that to *you alone*, after Heaven, my gratitude is due."

"Name it no more, my amiable friend," replied Mary; "your praise wounds rather than sooths my distracted mind. I feel that to be *all* you say, requires the hand of time and the voice of religion. It is not enough that I have *acted* as I ought, it is requisite that I should also be able to *think* with resignation, and to teach my heart to cease its convulsive throbbings at the mention of a name which it is now criminal to adore."

"Dearest Mary," said Agnes, tenderly, "for your sake I wish this were possible; but never must you expect to think of Donald with indifference. The ardour of passion may abate, as well as the severity of your present feelings, but he will ever be dear to you; it is not in human nature that it should be otherwise; and the Almighty even will not punish you for a weakness which none but the hypocrite or

the stoic would venture to bring within the pale of censure."

Mary, notwithstanding the kind encouragement of Agnes, could not avoid blaming the undiminished tenderness of her own heart towards Monteith. She had not courage to dispossess his miniature of its place in her bosom, neither could she refrain, when alone, from drawing it from the silken case which she had made, and weeping over features whose beauty was, however, outdone by the original. Yet this improper indulgence she concealed from Mrs. Byron, not from any desire to appear what she was not, but from a motive of affection, as she well knew that her maternal friend would be uneasy, if she supposed that she continued to feed the flame which threatened to consume her.

The first time that she parted with her infant, at the entreaty of Agnes, was a severe trial to Mary; but she nevertheless yielded to her wishes, and the boy was almost smothered with kisses on his return,

for had he not received those of his father? He was now permitted daily to pass an hour or two at the hotel, until the departure of Monteith for Clifton. The whole of the day preceding his journey, the child spent with his father, who loaded him with presents and caresses, and who found extreme difficulty in suffering him to depart without some token of remembrance to the mother still beloved.

Mr. Graham took back the lovely image of Monteith; he placed him in the open arms of his mother, who pressing him fondly to her bosom, found the tears start into her eyes, for she recollected that it might be long ere he was again blessed with the sight of his father.

Her venerable friend, too delicate to notice her distress, conversed with Mrs. Byron upon the route they meant to take, and upon the benefit his son would derive from the change of situation. When he perceived that Mary was a little more collected, he said—" As it may be some months before I have the happiness of em-

bracing you again, my dear daughter, I must beg that you will now draw upon me for what you want. I have settled with the mistress of the house up to the time you mentioned for your removal to Hampstead, and only wish to be informed if I can otherwise be of service to you before I leave town."

Mary kissed his hand with filial affection—"I will not attempt," said she, "to thank you for your paternal kindness towards me and my beloved child. My conduct shall prove my gratitude. Never can I for a moment forget the obligations which I owe you. But for you, and my dear Mrs. Byron, I should have sunk under the heavy calamity which has so nearly overwhelmed me. My boy, I hope, will live to thank you for the tenderness which you, my generous friends, have both shewn towards his unfortunate mother."

She paused to clear her trembling voice, and then continued—"I am now recovering from my illness; I am gaining strength, and, I hope, fortitude. Will you not be

offended, my father, if your adopted daughter deals candidly with you, respecting her intentions and wishes?"

"No, my child," replied Mr. Graham; "speak, therefore, with confidence. I do not feel inclined to deny a request of yours."

Mary could not restrain her tears at this fresh mark of his esteem; and Mrs. Byron, who was a stranger to her wishes, sat with anxious curiosity to hear them explained.

"I hope," said Mary, pressing the hands of each of her friends, "that you will neither of you attribute to pride the resolution I have made of obtaining for myself and infant a subsistence by my own exertions. While I was incapable of making any, I silently submitted to receive the paternal benevolence of my adopted father; but now that I am daily gaining health and strength, it would be unjust and improper of me to continue to lead a life of indolence, and to eat the bread of generosity. No, my father, my friend, I should be unworthy of your adoption,

could I consent to remain a useless burthen on your benevolence. The talents I possess, and which have been cultivated under so able a master as your son, those talents will now enable me to provide, perhaps handsomely, for his offspring. I wish him to owe every thing to his mother—it is the desire of a weak yet tender heart—do not disappoint me; it will afford me the highest gratification—it will encourage me to bear with my fate."

Mr. Graham flung his arms around the agitated Mary, and embracing her, affectionately inquired by what means she proposed to accomplish her wishes?

"I have not yet decided," said she. "My dear Mrs. Byron has promised to continue to share my fortune, such as it is. I shall therefore not be in want of an able assistant in any plan which is likely to prove successful."

"I know but of one," said Mr. Graham, "that would be at all lucrative, and that I should not consent to, were it not for the desire I have to oblige you, my dear Mary,

and also my wish that you should completely overcome your present misfortunes. A life of retirement is not calculated to raise the sinking spirits of one who has suffered as severely as yourself. Change of scene, a succession of agreeable objects, a something in view by which a desirable end is to be obtained, and the mind always kept on the alert, is requisite to banish from the heart which has been deeply wounded the remembrance of the past. The education of youth is a delightful employment; and with your accomplishments, you might obtain a situation highly respectable in some family of distinction. I mention this, Mary, not that I think such a thing at all *necessary*, but to shew that you may confide in me fearlessly. At all events, and under all circumstances, I shall consider you as my adopted daughter; and if you do not actually wish to renounce the claim you have on my affection and my fortune, you will promise me not to take any step without consult-

ing me first, and to condescend to receive from me the trifling sum of a hundred a-year, until you are placed beyond the possibility of such assistance being needful." He then presented her with a bank-note of five-and-twenty pounds.

"I will not refuse this kindness, my dear sir," said Mary, gratefully, "lest you should indeed be displeased with me; but I will hope that a repetition of it may not be necessary. Most joyfully do I promise to consult you in every thing; and I flatter myself that you will not forget how gratifying it will be to me to hear from you as often as you can spare time to write."

"You shall not complain of my correspondence, Mary; of all that can interest you, I will not fail to inform you. Agnes will derive particular pleasure in your letters, which you may enclose to me, and I will forward to you her answers."

Mary thanked him. She had seen Mrs. Monteith in the morning, and had taken leave of her. The parting had affected

them both—it might be many months before they might meet again. Agnes was quitting town to attend a husband whom she loved, and who no longer refused to acknowledge her as his wife—Mary was on the eve of quitting it also, with the dear pledge of Donald's love; but, alas! no adoring husband accompanied *her*. She was a mother, but no longer a wife; and she dreaded lest she should encounter the frown of censure, or the rebuke of the illiberal.

To obviate this, Mrs. Byron proposed that she should pass for a widow; but to this Mary objected. "I mean," said she, "to take my mother's maiden name; my boy shall be my nephew, the orphan child of a brother entrusted to my care; and you, my valuable friend, will give credit to this tale by your countenance and protection."

Mrs. Byron consented to the proposal of Mary, and they prepared to remove to the house of Mrs. Byron's relation, who, in fact, was no other than a sister of her own,

who had married imprudently, and thus forfeited the affection of her parents, having selected for a husband a man who was butler in a gentleman's family, and who, though possessed of a good heart and good understanding, was certainly not an object to gratify the wishes of her family.

A most painful task remained for Mary, that of parting with her faithful and affectionate Betty, before she removed to Hampstead. The poor creature wept immoderately when informed of the necessity there was for her getting another situation. She offered to attend on her beloved mistress without any wages; and her grief was so violent, that nothing could have appeased it, had not Mary assured her that she should always be at liberty to call and see her and her young master, and that should she ever again be able to keep an attendant of her own, Betty should be immediately informed of the good news. With difficulty she persuaded the worthy woman to accept of five pounds, as a small mark of the gratitude of her

mistress, who could not avoid shedding tears of real concern, when she parted from one so truly attached to her and her infant.

At Hampstead they were received in the most cordial manner by Mrs. Sutton and her two daughters; the youngest of whom, a girl about thirteen, begged and prayed that she might be permitted to become the nurse of master Seymour, to which her mother readily consented, providing that it met with the approbation of his *aunt*.

"You look but delicate, Miss," said she, addressing herself to Mary; "but good nursing and pure air will, I dare say, soon make you well again. It's no service to the dead to fret after them; and since you have got to take care of this sweet boy, God bless him! why, you must try to forget all disagreeables as soon as you can."

She then nearly smothered the child with her good-natured caresses, while Anna and Sophy loaded him with cakes, and almost quarrelled who should have him next.

Their mother, however, silenced their contention, by sending the eldest, a pretty-looking young woman about eighteen, to look after the dinner, cautioning her to be sure to mind that the fowls were not over-roasted, and that the custard pudding was well done; Sophy was employed to lay the cloth; while Mrs. Sutton, with Donald in her arms, led the way to the rooms allotted to her new lodgers.

With secret exultation she conducted them to her first floor, which she had given up for the use of her sister and her young friend, and then into the next apartment, which she always kept as a spare bed-room for a visitor. Both these chambers were handsomely furnished, in the modern style, and she felt a pride in having such at the service of a friend when wanted. A good fire blazed in each, and Mrs. Sutton assured them that they need not be afraid of the bed, as it had been slept in only two nights ago—"I see," said she, "that young master has brought his own bed with him; it will stand nicely in that

corner; and if you, Miss, and my sister like to sleep together, you can, or else sister can have half of Anna's bed, just as you like."

Mary preferred having her old friend with her, who, on her part, was equally disinclined to separate—"The prospect is very beautiful, is it not, Miss Seymour?" continued Mrs. Sutton. "It has been very much admired, both from the front and back windows. In summer the heath is very pretty, and you may walk about, and always find something new to admire. My sister, though she is an old woman now, will shew you plenty of nice walks, and my daughters will be very much delighted to help to carry young master. Bless his heart, what a sweet creature it is! What is his name?"

"Donald," said Mary, sighing deeply.

"Donald—a Scotch name; then, I presume, his father was a native of Scotland? My husband is a Scotchman, and so fond of children, that, between us all, I believe we shall spoil him."

Dinner was now announced by Sophy, who taking the baby from her mother, asked permission of his *aunt* to have him on her lap at table, and to feed him. The smiles and good-humour of the child completely won the hearts of Mrs. Sutton and her daughters, and Mrs. Byron felt delighted at the kindness all of them shewed towards the baby and its loving mother.

As soon as the repast was finished, the two girls busied themselves in arranging the bed of their new favourite, and placing in order the things which belonged to their aunt and Mary. Like their mother, they were both of them perfectly good-tempered, very fat, rather pretty, and as unlike their aunt Byron in every respect as if they were not related to her. Conscious of her superiority over them in personal and mental acquirements, they paid the utmost deference to her opinion, and felt proud whenever she honoured their cottage by her presence.

Mrs. Sutton and her sisters had not certainly had the same advantages as Mrs.

Byron, yet their education had been above the common, as well as their acquaintances and habits of life. Mrs. Sutton was the youngest, and the only one of the family who had disgraced herself by an unequal marriage. She had removed with her husband to London, almost immediately after her union, and had never held any correspondence with her family, except with Mrs. Byron, who, though hurt at her want of proper pride, and grieved at the misery her folly had brought on her parents, could not wholly renounce a sister whose youth, inexperience, and good-nature, might plead in some measure as an excuse for her fault, which fault had likewise brought with it its own punishment, since it had estranged her for ever from the home of her infancy, and the dear companions of her childhood.

It was some years before Mrs. Byron saw her sister, although she had corresponded with her regularly. When they met, she felt pained to perceive that the little delicate slim girl she had left at

her mother's, was transformed into a fat, coarse-looking woman, whose manners also were tinctured by the society she had kept since her removal from home; no traces remained of what she once was, except her good humour, and her friendly pity for those who were unfortunate. Contented with her husband, delighted with her children, who were all that remained of a numerous progeny, Mrs. Sutton was never heard to express a regret at the choice she had made. Her husband had lived in the same family from his youth, where he had acquired enough to leave his daughters no very contemptible fortunes. The principal part of the year he passed on the heath, where his old master had a noble house, and kept a regular set of servants, and to whom Sutton was frequently a companion, and always a confidential friend. The old gentleman was fast declining, and at his death Sutton meant to quit the family, and retire with his wife and daughters into his native country.

Mrs. Byron, notwithstanding her chagrin at witnessing the change in her sister, nevertheless continued occasionally to visit her, and it occurred to her, immediately upon Mary's misfortunes, that her house would be a comfortable asylum, until she was sufficiently recovered to fix upon a more eligible mode of living; she therefore acquainted Mary with the imprudent marriage of her sister, at the same time assuring her, that if she liked to reside with her, she might depend on being treated with hospitality and kindness, and might also board with the family at a much less expence than she could lodge any where else.

Mary immediately consented to this plan of her maternal friend, who accordingly went to her sister to agree upon the terms.

Mrs. Sutton, highly gratified at the idea of having under the same roof with herself a sister for whom she entertained so profound a respect, would hardly consent to receive any pecuniary consideration; and

when informed that a young lady, under the care of Mrs. Byron, and a child, were likewise to be accommodated, she only named a trifling recompence, too much pleased to be honoured with their society. The best that her house afforded was got ready to give them welcome; and in the evening, when Mr. Sutton came home as usual to his supper, Mary received from him the same cordial reception; while nothing would satisfy his daughters but that their father must go and look at the sleeping Cupid, as they called the little Donald.

The kindness of the whole family was now directed towards the recovery of Mary, whose pale and interesting appearance called forth the friendly pity of Mrs. Sutton in particular. She took a pleasure in procuring for her every little delicacy she could think of; and when she was called down to dinner or supper, watched her countenance with eagerness, to see if she was pleased with what she had made for her. Had she chosen, she might have had her meals brought up to her, but Mary

hated to give unnecessary trouble, and unless when Mrs. Sutton had visitors, always came down, and partook of what was provided in the parlour.

Mrs. Byron, by the advice and assistance of Mr. Graham, had let her house to a respectable widow lady for two years, and had therefore determined to continue with her sister, unless circumstances should cause her removal. She saw with inconceivable delight, that the health of Mary was recovering gradually, and that the smile of gratitude or maternal fondness would occasionally dimple her cheek; yet the thorn still remained—the poison was still to be extracted. All that kindness and friendship could invent was done to charm away her melancholy; and Mary, who possessed a disposition keenly alive to those little attentions which sweeten the bitterness of sorrow's cup, strove to return them by every possible means within her power. She made a variety of little fancy articles for the rooms, painted some beautiful landscape views for the parlour,

and taught the Miss Suttons several of the fashionable needle-works. The youngest had not yet finished school, and Mary proposed to her mother to keep her at home during her residence among them, and to instruct her herself.

This was truly flattering to Mrs. Sutton, and Sophy was accordingly placed under the tuition of Mary, who, grateful for the affection shewn towards herself and child, took great pains with the docile daughter of her new friend.

Thus employed, the remainder of the winter passed away with tolerable cheerfulness. Donald was the pet of the whole family; he was seldom out of Mrs. Sutton's arms, unless when she was obliged to give him to one or other of her daughters. The pains they took with him soon brought him to run alone, unknown to his mother, who was sitting one morning at work, with Mrs. Byron, when Anna opened the door, and placing the baby on his feet, told him to go to aunt. The smiling infant ran to the knees of his

trembling and surprised parent, who, catching him in her arms, half devoured him with caresses, overjoyed at his being able to go without the assistance of the finger.

Spring now put forth its enchanting verdure, and Mary began to indulge herself, by strolling with her son and Sophy over the romantic and picturesque heath and walks of the village. Sometimes Mrs. Byron and Anna accompanied them, but more frequently they went alone; and as the season advanced, Mary would take her little boy, before breakfast, to inhale for an hour the pure air of the heath. She had heard several times from Mr. Graham and from Agnes—they were well. Monteith was tolerably recovered, yet still an invalid. The style of their letters was tender and soothing—those of Agnes were replete with gratitude; all that she now enjoyed she owed to Mary. "Ah!" sighed the once-happy Mary, "*who* would not be Agnes Graham? Yet unless she pos-

sesses the *heart* of Monteith, *who* would be Agnes Graham?"

Among the articles which Mr. Graham had preserved for his adopted daughter, he had ordered that her harp and piano should be sent to the lodgings which he had taken for her in town; and when Mary was a little recovered from the effects of her severe illness, he had them restored to her. Mary being unable, however, to bear the sight of what recalled most forcibly to her recollection the adored master under whose tuition she had become mistress of them, Mrs. Byron had them again removed into a spare room; and upon Mary's consenting to reside with Mrs. Sutton, had them conveyed to Hampstead, with a request that her sister would place them with the rest of the articles which she should not immediately want, in some safe and private chamber. Mary was ignorant that she still possessed these sacred gifts of Monteith; she had not courage to inquire after them, neither did she feel a wish to

exert her talents, until the idea that they might be serviceable to her infant first taught her to conquer her own repugnance to become once more a performer.

Returning one morning with her child from her accustomed walk, she was astonished at hearing the sound of a well-known dance. She hurried up stairs; she entered the sitting-room; a harp stood by the window, and Mrs. Byron was playing the piano. Mary instantly recognised them to be hers; she rushed towards them, her eyes filled with tears.

"Dearest Mary!" cried her friend, "are you not glad that I have preserved these articles for your use? They will now be of service to you; they will perhaps enable you to put in practice your intended plan."

Mary dried her tears, and embracing Mrs. Byron, said—"Bear with my weakness, my best friend; I know the kindness of your intention. In a few days I shall be able to view them with composure—perhaps to touch them."

Mrs. Byron knew what was passing within her mind, and felt for her distress —"My child," she replied, "I doubt not your readiness to conquer every feeling that is become censurable. In this, as well as in every other instance, I am assured of your acting with propriety. The possession of these instruments may be valuable to you, as I think it not impossible but that you might easily procure a sufficient number of pupils to answer your present purpose. With your consent I will undertake the task."

Mary joyfully assented to this proposal, and Mrs. Byron sought a proper opportunity of mentioning to her sister and her husband the wishes of her young friend.

"Well," cried Mrs. Sutton, "now this is highly praiseworthy in so young a woman. I suppose she is anxious to do her best for the dear child as long as she has the care of him, and it is much to be commended in her. I hope my daughters will take a pattern by her, though, thank God! they are not in need of such a thing as to

go out in the world; yet, if they ever should, they will remember this excellent young creature, who seems as if she had been brought up a lady from her birth, and I dare say never before thought of getting her own living."

"If I was sure that she was able to teach music well," said Mr. Sutton, "I think I could recommend her to our house. My master's daughter-in-law is come down to spend the summer with him; she has four little girls, and the governess, I heard say, does not play to please their mother, who told Mr. Richardson the other day, that she must look out for a good music-master, and one that could teach the eldest young lady the harp. Now, if Miss Seymour could do this, why, you know, Mrs. Byron, she might as well have the money as any body else. I know that they pay well, and that their pay is sure."

Mrs. Byron told him that he might rest satisfied that her young friend would not discredit his recommendation—"You

have too much good sense," said she, "not to see that this is an affair which requires great delicacy. Miss Seymour is a gentlewoman by birth; family misfortunes, and her being left an orphan, have obliged her to think of increasing the little property which she has; and the singular circumstance of her being left the principal guardian of her brother's child, makes her more anxious to add to her income, that she may not touch upon what belongs to the boy."

"Well, I will take the opportunity of speaking to-morrow to Mrs. Richardson. *Your* word is sufficient to embolden me to propose that Miss Seymour should call on her."

When Mary was preparing, the next day, to take her usual walk with her son and Sophy, Mrs. Byron expressed a wish that she should remain at home; to explain the reason of which, she informed her of what had passed the evening before between her and Mr. Sutton—"It is therefore not improbable, my love, but that Mrs. Richard-

son may send for you, or perhaps call on us herself."

Mary could not help testifying great agitation at this intelligence; much as she desired such an event, she nevertheless dreaded to encounter the opinion, perhaps censure, of strangers; and her agitation increased when Sutton came to inform her that he had spoken to Mrs. Richardson, who requested that, if convenient, Miss Seymour would call on her that morning. Seeing her confusion, he good-naturedly shook her by the hand, and told her that she need not be afraid; for though Mrs. Richardson was quite a woman of high fashion, yet she was very affable and good to those whom she employed, and that if she was pleased with her performance, she would not grudge any money to have her to teach the children—"Only take care of young master, as I still call Mr. Frederic," said he; "though he is between thirty and forty, yet he loves a handsome face as much as if he was a single man, and more so, for what I know; for his lady, though

a very good woman, is a very plain one: and now I think of it, your beauty may be much against you, Miss Seymour; for she is so fearful of any thing like beauty coming into the house, that she has got a governess as ugly as old Harry, and all her own female servants cannot have a stronger recommendation than a crooked nose, squinting eyes, that look two ways at once, hare-lips, and hump-backs."

Mary could not refrain from half smiling at this information of Sutton's. He, nevertheless, encouraged her to hope, that as Mr. Frederic never interfered with the children's education, nor ever felt a wish to take a peep at any female about his lady, she might still be engaged, notwithstanding she possessed the unpardonable fault of having a handsome person.

After some little conversation with Mrs. Byron, Mary summoned up resolution to accompany Sutton to his master's house. With great respect he conducted her into the drawing-room appropriated to Mrs. Richardson, where that lady received her

with great affability, though at first she could hardly restrain her surprise at the unadorned elegance of the person who now appeared before her, and who, had not Sutton announced her to be the Miss Seymour whom he had just mentioned to her, she should have imagined to be some lady of distinction who was paying her a morning visit.

Mary was dressed in deep mourning, which she had worn ever since her separation from Monteith. Still the gracefulness of her form, and the pale but highly interesting beauty of her features, could not be concealed, and Mrs. Richardson viewed her with a mingled sensation of pity, admiration, and fear; she, however, politely requested her to be seated, and immediately inquired if she had ever been in the habit of giving lessons, and who was her master?

Mary, embarrassed by the novelty of her situation, replied in a faltering voice, that she had never, until lately, had occasion to adopt such a plan, but that cir

cumstances had now made it needful. She had studied principally under a relation, who was since dead; but that she had taken lessons from Mr. ——, who was, she believed, considered as one of the best masters."

"He is," said Mrs. Richardson; "and I should be happy to have my daughters instructed by so able a performer; but his time is too much engaged, and he has declined having any pupils who are not immediately within his rounds. Do you play on the harp?"

Mary replied in the affirmative.

Mrs. Richardson then led her into the music-room, and requested her to give her a specimen of her talents.

Mary sat down to the instrument with all the trepidation natural to her situation; she saw that the piece selected for her was a difficult one; but she, nevertheless, acquitted herself to the satisfaction of her attentive hearer, who, after expressing her entire conviction of her abilities, next desired her to touch the harp. As this was

the favourite instrument of Monteith, Mary felt herself considerably affected as she struck the chords; and though, for this reason, she perhaps appeared to less advantage, Mrs. Richardson perceived, that were she more at ease, she would be equally skilful on this instrument as on the other.

"I am almost ashamed," said she, "to introduce my daughters to you; they have contracted habits which I fear will occasion you a great deal of trouble, and require a great deal of patience to break them. You shall, however, judge for yourself."

She now rang the bell, and desired the footman to tell Miss Gilby to bring her pupils into the music-room. In a few minutes the governess made her appearance, followed by four pleasant-looking children, the eldest of whom seemed to be turned of twelve, the youngest about nine years of age. They no sooner touched the piano than Mary discovered that they

had been badly instructed; yet, from the docile looks of the little girls, she did not despair of removing this difficulty; and with a modest diffidence, which highly pleased their mother, she consented to undertake the task.

"What are your terms?" inquired Mrs. Richardson in an encouraging tone of voice.

"I must leave that entirely to you, madam," replied Mary, colouring.

"Well then, Miss Seymour, to convince you that I think highly of your talents, I shall consider that your services are of the same value as those of the master you mentioned, and could wish that you would, if convenient, give them lessons three times a-week, as I am anxious to have them brought as forward as possible. Are you satisfied with my proposal?"

Mary thought that nothing could be more liberal.

Mrs. Richardson then fixed the days on which Mary was to attend, naming those hours when she knew her husband always

went out. She then dismissed the children, who, with their cross, ill-looking governess, returned to the school-room, charmed by the sweet appearance of the lady who was to instruct them in music.

Mary rose to depart, promising to begin with her pupils the next morning; and so much had she won upon the esteem of Mrs. Richardson, that she could not help regretting that Mary was not ugly and ill-made, as she would then have assuredly had her to reside in the house; as it was, the thing was impossible. She would deserve a statute of lunacy to be taken out against her, if she were mad enough to place so beautiful a girl under the same roof with her husband. It was not perfectly safe to allow of the visits of such a dangerous object; but these she would hazard, and Sutton was strictly enjoined always to conduct Miss Seymour by the private staircase into the music-room, and to inform her immediately of her arrival.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning Mary, after bestowing on her blooming infant an additional number of caresses, proceeded to the elegant mansion of Mr. Richardson. Sutton was ready to receive her; and as he conveyed her by the back-way, apologized, smilingly, for the order of Mrs. Richardson, which he set down to the right cause, her fear lest she should by chance meet with her husband.

The good sense of Mary taught her to overlook what some weak-minded young women would have considered as an insult; she pitied the unfortunate failing of Mrs. Richardson, who appeared, in every other respect, an amiable character, and who had behaved towards her with great liberality. Mary had likewise resolved not to injure herself in the opinion of those whom

she attended, by assuming a consequence which, in her present situation of life, might only draw down upon her the prying eye of curiosity and the tongue of slander; she therefore, on the approach of Mrs. Richardson, whose countenance betrayed some degree of embarrassment, took care to conduct herself in a manner which shewed that lady that her mind was superior to taking offence at trifles.

The sweetness of Mary's disposition, and her fondness for children, soon made her beloved by her pupils, who strove which should most gain the approbation of their new instructress; while their mother, equally charmed with the rapid improvement of her daughters, and the person and manners of Mary, felt a real regret that she was too handsome to be trusted to the knowledge of their libertine father. The eldest Miss Richardson, in particular, had a taste for music; her voice was good, and her mother, therefore, felt desirous that it should be improved, by learning early to manage it scientifically. She inquired

of Mary whether she would undertake to instruct her to accompany herself on the harp? to which Mary modestly replied, that she should be happy to afford Miss Richardson all the assistance in her power; but that she would not undertake to give her regular lessons, as she did not feel competent to the task.

"You are very obliging, Miss Seymour; and if it is not asking too much of you, will you take the harp, and favour me with this beautiful air by Moore?"

Mary knew it well, and sung it with all the pathos and sweetness which it deserved.

Mrs. Richardson was delighted; she took Mary by the hand in rapture—"You have enchanted me, Miss Seymour," said she, "by your voice and style. I love music, and I could listen to you the whole of the day, if I had leisure. What an acquisition you would be to my concerts! How happy I should feel in having you always with me, were it not for one unfortunate circumstance."

She now dismissed her daughters, and

then resumed the conversation—" You are precisely the being, Miss Seymour, that I could wish to reside with my children; but the freedom of Mr. Richardson's education, and his libertine principles with respect to women, make it impossible for me to offer you a residence under my roof. Believe me, I regret this most sincerely. Your appearance, your manners, all assure me that you would be a treasure to my family, but for this sole objection."

Mary could not avoid expressing her thanks for the favourable idea Mrs. Richardson had formed of her; she however said, that it would not be convenient for her to leave the friend under whose protection she now was.

" I must confess," said Mrs. Richardson, " that you have gained so much on my esteem, that I wish it were possible for you to become a daily governess to my daughters; when I return to town for the winter, I must think of it. Mr. Richardson seldom or ever enters the apartments of his children, and I should still retain

Miss Gilby to attend them in your absence. Are you at all acquainted with Italian?"

Mary replied, that she believed she knew it sufficiently to teach it, as well as French; and that, if requisite, she could also give lessons in drawing and painting.

Mrs. Richardson looked at her for a moment, then said—"Your education, Miss Seymour, I perceive, has not been a superficial one. Your youth and situation have interested me. Rely upon my doing all that I can to serve you. My acquaintance is very extensive; if I cannot myself be so happy as to derive pleasure from your society, some of my friends, who are not so restricted as I am, may."

This friendly assurance from a person of her rank and connexions was highly flattering to Mary, and not less so to Mrs. Byron, who, naturally sanguine in her hopes, began to see in imagination her beloved Mary once again restored to comfort, independence, and, perhaps, to happiness; while Mary, tenderly pressing her

child to her bosom, prayed to Heaven that her endeavours might be crowned with success for his dear sake.

"Should Mrs. Richardson continue to wish for your attendance in town, my love," said her venerable friend, "do not make any objection to her proposal. Her interest will be of essential service to you, and we can easily remove to a convenient situation."

"My chief objection," replied Mary, "would be to leave my boy for so many hours, as I must then be absent the best part of the day. Even now I count the minutes as they fly, and find my spirits rise in proportion as the time draws near which gives me freedom to embrace him."

"Fear not for him," said her steady friend; "I am not yet so old, but that I can accommodate myself to his pleasures. It may be necessary that you should sometimes entrust him to my care, and these temporary separations will enable you to bear with those of a longer period."

Under the careful tuition of Mary, the

Miss Richardsons began to improve so rapidly, that their father could not avoid observing the alteration in their usual mode of performing, and inquired, in a careless manner, who had become their new master? The children had been cautioned not to notice to him the beauty of Miss Seymour; their replies, therefore, were such as did not excite his curiosity, and they were questioned no more.

Three months had nearly elapsed, and Mary continued to gain upon the friendship of Mrs. Richardson, though at one time it was nearly forfeited. She had called one morning, for the first time, on Mary; and on being conducted by Sophy to her apartments, found her and Mrs. Byron anxiously endeavouring to stop the crying of little Donald, who had fallen down and cut his hand severely. The unexpected entrance of Mrs. Richardson increased the vexation of Mary, whose tears were falling fast on the piteous face of her darling boy, who ceased his lamentation at the sight of the strange lady, and

suffered his hand to be bound up with great patience. This done, Mary apologized to Mrs. Richardson for the disorder in which she had found them, and begged leave to present to her Mrs. Byron, as the friend under whose protection she was placed.

Mrs. Richardson was pleased with the amiable appearance of her young *protégée*'s protector—"But to whom," said she, "does this lovely child belong? I would give half my fortune to be his mother."

"He is the son of Miss Seymour's sister," hastily replied Mrs. Byron. "His mother dying, bequeathed him to our care, until his father, who is abroad, should return to England."

Mrs. Richardson continued to admire the lovely child; and though she did not wholly disbelieve this assertion of Mrs. Byron, yet she tried to trace out a resemblance to Mary, whose poignant distress had at first awakened her suspicions; nor were they immediately done away, since she had always thought that there was a

something mysterious in the beautiful teacher, whose air and manners were so much above her situation.

The more, however, that Mrs. Richardson saw of Mary, the more she esteemed her; and as Mr. Richardson had gone to pass a fortnight with a relation in Sussex, she frequently walked home with her, after the lessons were over, and chatted an hour or two with her and Mrs. Byron, not allowing either of her daughters to accompany her, lest they should by chance mention to their father the place of Miss Seymour's abode. These prudent precautions were however soon rendered fruitless, by one of those occurrences which no human foresight can prevent.

The brother of Mr. Richardson, who was a general officer, was called to town two days before the appointed time, and with him came Mr. Frederic, the father of Mary's young pupils. On their arrival at Hampstead they hastened to the music-chamber, where the servant informed them his lady was with the children. Mrs. Richardson

no sooner beheld her husband than she turned pale, and would have hurried the two brothers out of the room, had not the general prevented her, by saying, that he should like to hear if Hester was yet able to play his favourite march.

Miss Richardson immediately sat down to the instrument, and as she had repeatedly practised it under the eye of Mary, went through it so much to the satisfaction of her uncle, that he declared he would give her a new watch to reward her for her diligence. Her sisters, who were equally beloved by him, and whose spirits were exhilarated by his presence, each displayed their improved abilities, and each received his promise to meet with their reward.

During this innocent trial of their skill, poor Mary felt herself most awkwardly situated; she remained by the side of her pupils, until they had quitted the instrument, when she joyfully availed herself of the opportunity to return home, leaving Mrs. Richardson sick with vexation at this

unexpected introduction, and terrified by the fear of what might happen, now that Mary had been seen by her husband.

"What *are* you thinking of, my dear sister?" said the general, observing her absence of mind; "and what *were* you thinking of, my dear sister, when you engaged with so lovely a girl as Miss Seymour, to give lessons under the same roof with Frederic? or has he left off his wild tricks, and turned the good husband at last?"

Mrs. Richardson tried to force a smile.

"I can hardly credit my senses," replied Mr. Frederic; "so uncommon is it for me to behold any thing like a decent-faced woman in my family. Ha, ha, ha! I verily believe that Hester gives a reward to all the ugly girls who will come and enlist under her banners. Upon my soul! I am almost afraid to stir about at home, and generally send my man before me to clear the way of the house scarecrows. From the kitchen-wench to the lady's maid, they are all, without exception, the rarest as-

semblage of ugliness and deformity that is to be met with in the whole kingdom. You must call with me to-morrow, Ned, for you may not have an opportunity again of viewing so choice a collection.

"As mad as ever, Frederic," said his brother; "but, Hester, is it true that you have a dislike to pretty servants? for my part, I always desire my housekeeper to engage with none that are not handsome, as I have a mortal aversion to being served by any other."

"Probably *you* may," said Mrs. Richardson; "but were your housekeeper your wife, I think she would not be very willing to execute your orders. Frederic may amuse himself as much as he likes with my oddities, but I find that I am right in my system. I am now fortunate in having a set of servants who have lived with me several years, and who are not likely to be corrupted by the flattery of their master."

"No, on my soul! Hester, are they not?" said her husband, laughing heartily. Then

recollecting himself, he embraced her tenderly, saying—"Forgive me, my dear Hester; you know I am a sad thoughtless fellow; but I am always as ready to acknowledge *my* failings as *your* value. Few women, if any, deserve more to possess the heart of a husband than yourself; and I say it now before my brother, that few, I believe, are as highly esteemed, as sincerely regarded, as you are."

Mrs. Richardson's countenance now became animated with pleasure and affection; she returned the embrace of her husband with tenderness; and giving a hand to each of the brothers, accompanied them to the private apartments of their father.

Notwithstanding the happy turn which Mr. Frederic had given to the conversation, his wife was perfectly aware of the impression which the unadorned charms of Mary would make on his versatile disposition. This idea was unfortunately strengthened by his coming into the music-room, on some frivolous pretence, the next time that Mary attended on his

daughters. A circumstance so unusual could not fail of confirming her fears. She watched every movement of his eyes with jealous vigilance, and felt ready to faint, as he warmly applauded the progress made by his children under so able an instructress. What his tongue wanted courage to utter, was well expressed by the silent admiration of his looks; and Mary frequently felt the colour tinge her pale cheek as she encountered his ardent gaze.

Mrs. Richardson, convinced of the impropriety she had been guilty of, in introducing into her family an object of such danger to her peace, resolved to disclose to Mary the unhappy libertinism of her husband, in order to warn her against his artifices; and though now determined to give up all idea of engaging her as daily governess in town, she yet generously intended to use all her interest in her favour, should she continue to deserve it. How to gain an opportunity of speaking to Mary, without wounding her delicacy, was a thing to be considered. Mr. Fre-

deric now always made a point of being in the music-room; she therefore had no alternative but to call on Mary, which she accordingly did, one evening when her husband was engaged in town.

After bestowing a great deal of praise on the care and attention which Mary had paid to the improvement of her children, she said—"I am come, my dear Miss Seymour, to converse confidentially with you, and your amiable friend, on a subject most painful to my feelings, as I shall be compelled to expose the failings of one who is dearer to me than my existence. Yet to conceal them would be cruel, since my candour may save an innocent mind from being corrupted. Pardon me, my dear Miss Seymour, but I feel it an indispensable duty to caution you against the dangerous flattery of Mr. Richardson."

Mary started, and Mrs. Byron looked amazed; neither of them, however, interrupted Mrs. Richardson, who continued: "It was the misfortune of my husband to imbibe, when young, the most libertine opi-

nions of our sex. Uncontrolled in his actions, experience only confirmed them; and though he has been married nearly fourteen years, I find that the force of habit is still the same. It is for this reason that I sedulously avoid to employ in my family any female whose person is at all likely to tempt the wandering eyes of my husband. My esteem for you, Miss Seymour, joined to the high opinion I have of your abilities, made me anxious to have you as much as possible with my daughters; but I see that to continue the connexion would be equally dangerous to your repose as to mine. Mr. Richardson has seen you—that is enough to make me fear for your safety."

"You are very good, madam," replied Mrs. Byron, "to take this interest in the welfare of my young friend. Thank God! however, her principles are too firmly established to stand in need of such a precaution. May you never have any more serious cause of alarm than the present!"

Mrs. Richardson took the passive hand

of Mary—" Dear Miss Seymour, your good sense will, I am sure, prevent your being offended at what my friendship for you has induced me to discover; I do not suspect, for a moment, the propriety of your conduct, or the excellency of your heart. I only wish to put you on your guard, and to save you from the painful humiliation of receiving proposals which would offend a virtuous mind. The eyes of Mr. Richardson have betrayed to *me*, who, alas! too well am versed in their meaning, his admiration of your person; his next step will be to endeavour to secure you to himself. I would prevent this insult to one whom I sincerely esteem. Did you but know his character, and the many agonizing hours his inconstancy has occasioned me, you would excuse the liberty I have just taken, and would pity my situation; since, notwithstanding all his faults, I love him as tenderly as when we first were united."

Mary could not behold the tears of Mrs. Richardson without sympathizing in her

distress. She pressed her hand to her lips, and entreated that she would place confidence in what she was going to utter—"Believe me," said she, with animated warmth, "that I will sooner relinquish the pleasure of your generous friendship, than cause you to feel, on my account, a moment's uneasiness. I will not deceive you. I fear that Mr. Richardson *has condescended* to think me worthy of his notice, since I have observed him to pass and repass this cottage several times within the last six days; while the freedom of his looks made it perfectly easy for me to translate the honourable opinion which he has formed of me."

"My dear girl," cried Mrs. Richardson, embracing her affectionately, "your confidence shall not be misplaced. I am convinced that I shall never be deceived in you, nor shall you have cause to regret that you entrusted to the bosom of a wife the faults of her husband. Neither would I have either you, or this excellent friend of yours, imagine me to be a weak and

jealous woman. Experience has made me wise. It has taught me to avoid placing temptation in the way of Mr. Richardson. I know his inconstant nature; but let his follies be committed far from home. Never again will I subject myself to the mortification of being insulted by my servants, or looked upon with contemptuous pity by the governess of my children. Until I formed the determination of hiring nothing but the most forbidding-looking women for my domestics, I could not keep a servant a month. They discovered a thousand disagreeables, which no place but mine possessed; and I was continually tormented by the sight of fresh faces in my house, which were soon succeeded by others. At length I suspected the real cause of their desertion, and actually spoke to a distant relation of mine to procure me, at any price, a regular set of female domestics, whose ugliness and deformity were the best guardians of their chastity. Since then I have no longer had any reason to complain of fresh faces. I am aware

that this singular resolution of mine has drawn on me the censure of all my acquaintance, who designate me by the appellation of 'the jealous wife;' but I have been far happier than before, and therefore only smile at their good-natured attempts to rally me out of what they term my chief failing."

"I think you have acted prudently," replied Mrs. Byron; "and were every woman who has the *same reason* to be equally considerate, she would save herself from many a heartache, and her husband from many a pang of self-reproach. Nothing surely can be more improper, or more inconsiderate, than for a woman, conscious of this lamentable defect in her husband's nature, to hire a set of young and handsome girls as domestics, whose education and whose morality are seldom proof against the flattery and the gold of their superiors."

"I feel consoled by your approbation," replied Mrs. Richardson; "hitherto I have only received it from my own heart. But

tell me, dear Miss Seymour, since it is unfortunately become dangerous for you to attend my daughters much longer, how can I best exert the interest I possess to do you a real service? If it is requisite that you should increase your finances, would it not be more advisable for you to accept of a situation less exposed than the one you have now chosen? In less than a fortnight I mean to go down to Worthing; it would afford me real pleasure to be the means of promoting your comfort before I leave Hampstead."

Mary thanked her for her kindness, but declared that at that moment she felt herself unable to propose any thing. She, however, begged her to believe that she should always remember with gratitude the liberal treatment she had bestowed on one who was an entire stranger.

"Your appearance strongly prepossessed me," said Mrs. Richardson; "and though I once suffered severely from yielding to the impression of the moment, yet something assures me that I shall not be

deceived in *you*, and that the friendship I entertain for you will not be returned with ingratitude."

"In this instance, my dear madam," replied Mrs. Byron, "you need not fear to give way to the amiable confidence of your disposition. I will guarantee your safety. The more you know of my young charge, the more you will discover in her qualities worthy your regard."

"I believe you," said Mrs. Richardson; "and as I have set my heart upon being of service to her, I hope she will not allow me to be disappointed. A thought has occurred to me during our conversation, but perhaps it may not meet with your approbation. If I am not mistaken, Miss Seymour, I have mentioned to you more than once, a lady who resides at that beautiful house on the verge of the heath, near the hanging wood?"

"I think you told me that her name is Chudleigh," said Mary.

"It is so," continued Mrs. Richardson. "She is an eccentric character; but her

virtues are so numerous, that I could wish to introduce you to her, were I not prevented by her resolution not to see any one but those who are closely related to her. I alone, of my family, am privileged to visit her at all hours, as her husband was my first cousin. This alone would entitle me to her veneration, so sacredly does she cherish every thing connected with his memory."

"She is then a widow, I suppose," said Mrs. Byron.

"Unfortunately she is. Her husband, the late captain Chudleigh, fell in the battle of Talavera; since then she has lived in a state of melancholy seclusion, and will eventually, I am convinced, fall a martyr to her romantic attachment. The retirement in which she lives, and the many hours of sadness and of sorrow which she daily passes by herself, would receive some alleviation from the society of an accomplished female, whose mind was capable of entering into her distress, and whose tenderness of heart would lead her to de-

vote herself to the cause of my amiable relative. Despairing of ever being able to procure the companion and friend I have described, Mrs. Chudleigh continues to drag on a miserable existence, a victim to her conjugal affection. To-morrow I mean to call on her, and if possible, Miss Seymour, I will gain her consent to introduce you to her; as I am confident, that were she once to know you, she would ever after acknowledge herself my debtor."

Both Mary and her maternal friend expressed their obligation to Mrs. Richardson, who now took her leave, perfectly satisfied with the part she had acted, and the open and candid behaviour of the lovely object it was her earnest intention to befriend.

END OF VOL. III.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

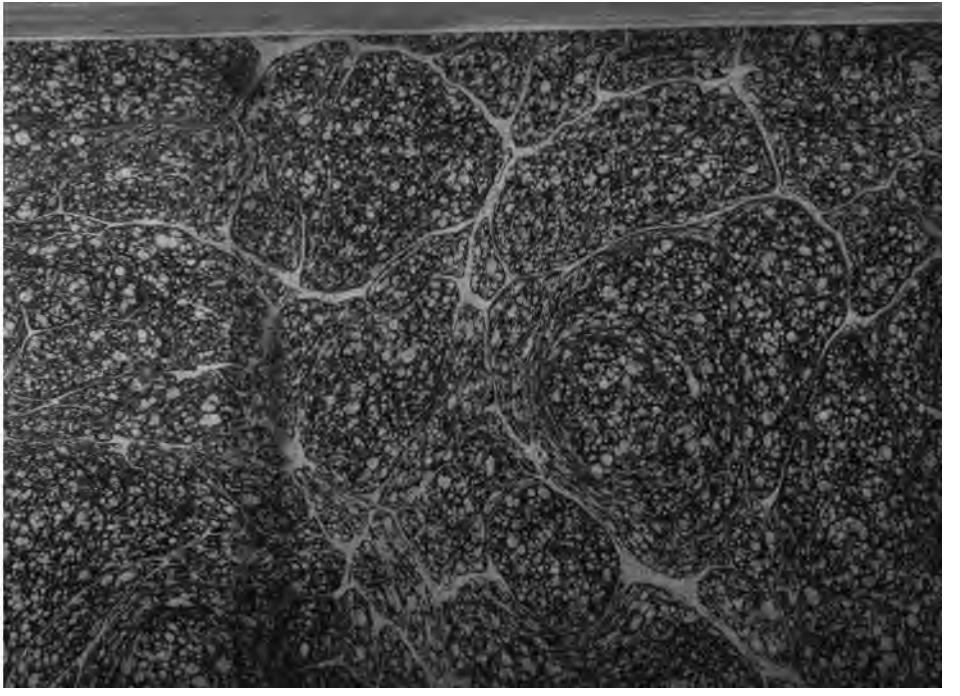
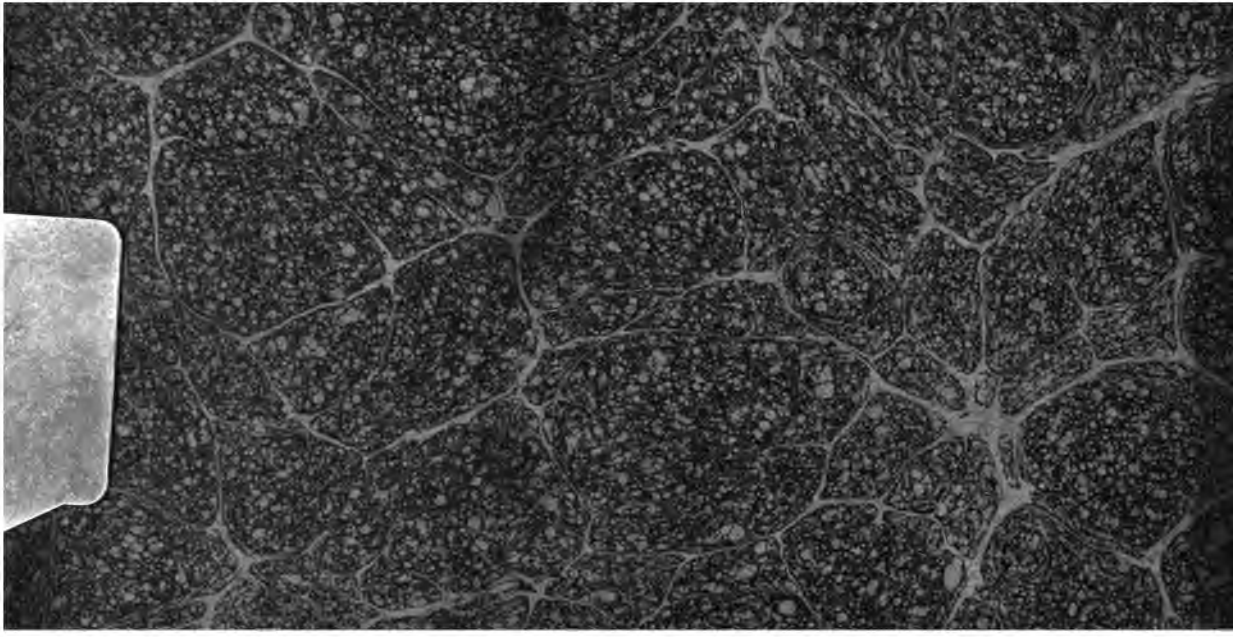
NEW PUBLICATIONS

PRINTED FOR

A. K. NEWMAN & CO.

AT THE

Minerva-Press,

LEADENHALL-STREET, LONDON.

	£	s.	d.
Bouverie, the Pupil of the World, by A. F. Holstein, 5 vols	1	7	6
Alexis, the Tyrant of the East, a Romance	0	5	0
Family Quarrels, by La Fontaine, 3 vols	0	15	0
The Vindictive Spirit, by Bridget Bluemantle, 4 vols	1	2	0
Caroline Ormsby, or the Real Lucilla, 2d edition	0	5	0
Laura Blundell and her Father, 3 vols.	0	15	0
The Confessional of Valombre, by Louisa Sidney Stanhope, Author of the Bandit's Bride, &c. 4 vols	1	2	0
The Borderers, an Historical Romance, illustrative of the Manners of the Fourteenth Century, 3 vols	0	15	0
Cava of Toledo, or the Gothic Princess, an Historical Romance, by Augusta Amelia Stuart, Author of Ludovico's Tale, &c. 5 vols	1	5	0
Dangers thro' Life, by Miss Gunning, 3 vols	0	15	0
Letters of an Irish Student, 8vo. 2d edition, 2 vols	0	14	0
Isadora of Milan, by A. F. Holstein, 5 vols	1	5	0
The Times, 2 vols	0	10	0
Sir William Dorien, by the Author of Margiana, 3 vols.	0	15	0
Matrimony!! by Mrs. Meeke, 4 vols	1	1	0
The Modern Kate, or a Husband perplexed, by A. F. Holstein, 2 vols	0	10	0
The Englishwoman, 2d edition, by Miss Byron, 5 vols	1	5	0
The Englishman, by the same, 6 vols	1	10	0
Yamboo, or the North American Slave, a Tale, by the Author of the Bravo of Bohemia, 3 vols	0	15	0